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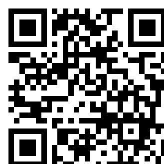

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AND THE CAUCASUS, 1919-1920

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'Russia at the Crossroads'; and (with Maurice B. Reckitt) 'The Meaning of National Guilds';

translated:

'The Twelve,' by Alexander Blok; and 'Five Russian Plays, with One from the Ukrainian,' by Evreinov, Chehov, Vonvizin, and Lesya Ukrainka;

and edited:

'A Russian Anthology in English.'

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IN DENIKIN'S RUSSIA

AND THE CAUCASUS, 1919-1920

Being the record of a journey to South Russia, the Crimea, Armenia, Georgia, and Baku in 1919 and 1920

by

C. E. BECHHOFER Roberts

With an Introduction by

ALFRED E. ZIMMERN
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With Two Maps

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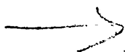

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AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

I HAVE endeavoured in these pages to describe life in South Russia and the Caucasus as I saw it in the winter of 1919 and the spring of 1920, and to relate it as far as possible to the principal events that have taken place there since the break-up of the old Russia in 1917. Thus practically the whole book breaks new ground.

My journey was undertaken for various reasons. I went primarily as a free-lance journalist. I wanted to see for myself what really was happening, to renew my acquaintance with the country, to find and, if possible, assist friends who were suffering there, and generally to study the situation on the spot. I think I was fortunate in having exceptional opportunities for observation, by virtue of my privileges as a British correspondent, knowledge of Russian, and previous experience of the country and people. The route I followed led me through Batum and Tiflis (the capital of Georgia) to Rostov and Taganrog, the headquarters of General Denikin's armies. Afterwards, during the retreat of the Volunteer Army, I spent some time at Ekaterinodar and Novorossisk. A call at Theodosia, in the Crimea, was the first stage of my return to the Caucasus, where I visited in turn Batum and Tiflis again, Erivan (the capital of the Armenian Republic), and Baku.

My first two and last three chapters deal with

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the Caucasus; while from the third to the seventh the country that was actually under General Denikin is treated of.

In my sixth chapter there will be found an account of the origin and exploits of the 'Green Guards,' the importance of whom as a factor in General Denikin's defeat is, as a rule, underestimated.

The ninth chapter describes experiences and conditions in Armenia; while the tenth deals with affairs at Baku, and sums up the present situation in the Caucasus.

It is unavoidable that this book should be to some extent a study of demoralisation, both the demoralisation of a great nation by suffering, and the demoralisation of some small peoples—Georgia, in particular—by ephemeral triumphs. The shameful desertion of Armenia by the Allied Governments of Western Europe and of America is in a different category. But, lest the reader should come to these pages in too gloomy a spirit, I venture to assure him that many of the incidents of Caucasian life during the past three years belong as much to the world of *opera bouffe* as to history. The Georgian invasion of the Batum Province, then occupied by British troops, in March, 1920, which resulted in the Georgian 'army of liberation' being confined to barracks by two young British subalterns and half a dozen sepoys —a description of which stirring episode occurs in my eighth chapter—is as characteristic of Caucasian affairs at the present day as, for instance, the more tragic incidents connected with the

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escape of Nouri Pasha from Batum, described in the first.

To the many friends of all nationalities who have helped me both on my journey and in the preparation of this book, I wish to offer my heartiest thanks. I should like to thank them by name, but there are in many cases obstacles to this, the nature of some of which will become evident in the course of this narrative.

A few of the following pages have appeared in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, the *Morning Post*, and *Land and Water*. Two translations of poems are reprinted by permission from the *Times Literary Supplement*. To the Editors of these papers my acknowledgments are due.

C. E. BECHHOFER.

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INTRODUCTION

My friend, Mr Bechhofer, has asked me to write an introduction to his book, not because I am qualified to act as sponsor for a book on South Russia and Transcaucasia, but because in these days of propaganda and party passion on everything connected with Russia, a plain statement by a disinterested and competent writer is apparently not assured of a public, or even of a publisher, without some certificate of respectability.

I am almost ashamed to give my friend the testimonial he requires. His book speaks for itself. It is exactly the sort of book that we need at the present moment if we are to return to some kind of equilibrium in our thinking on foreign affairs, and especially on Russia. The only criticism that can be made, not on it but about it, is that there ought to be a score or a hundred more books of the same vivid quality written by trained observers from many angles. Mr Bechhofer does not pretend to have seen the whole of his subject; he is no philosopher enunciating fine theories from a sublime altitude on a Falstaffian diet of a ha'porth of observation coupled with an intolerable deal of rhetoric. He has not been able to see all sides of Russian and Transcaucasian life from the inside—no human being could do that,

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least of all in a time of chaos and revolution—but he has seen a good deal and has been able to record it in a fashion which I hope many other readers will find as lifelike and illuminating as did the present writer.

Mr Bechhofer has many qualifications for writing on Russia and the Caucasus. Starting with the initial advantage that his mixed parentage involved, he set out at the age of seventeen to see the world—or rather that part of it which had a special attraction for him. He spent a short time in Japan and the better part of two years in India, where he was able, by his study of their literature and ideas, to make friends with educated Indians in a way that is unusual for a Western visitor. Nor did he confine his visit to British India or India under British protection. He visited French India and also the curious old-world Portuguese port of Goa and its hinterland. Both there and elsewhere in Asia and North Africa he gained a first-hand knowledge of other than British forms of extra-European government. Later on, in 1914, after medical discharge from the Army, he visited Russia with the intention of becoming an army interpreter. He travelled widely through the country, learnt Russian thoroughly, and made many close friendships. As the reader will discover for himself, his wife is a Russian.

It will, therefore, be seen that when he determined to revisit Russia last year he did so with an equipment very much superior to that of some recent writers on that country, whose attention was first attracted to it by the Revolution and

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its sequel. I do not wish to criticise any individual writer by name or to descend into the arena of political and journalistic controversy; but I think it is only fair to say, after some experience of life in foreign countries, that a visitor ignorant of the language and dependent on official and party introductions would need to be both extremely wideawake and extremely wise—qualities not often found in common—to bring back a judgment of much value after a first visit to a new country. I have lived just long enough in Wales to know how ridiculous the passing English visitor, even when he is inquisitive, can make himself when he sets out to deliver judgment on the Welsh language or character, or even on the more concrete institutional mysteries of Welsh Nonconformity. Yet Wales is next door to England, and has shared political and many other institutions with her for six centuries; nor is she in a state of violent upheaval and revolution. It is the same with England herself. It is not uncommon for visitors to arrive in London armed with introductions to every possible leader of a 'movement'; but every one knows that they will learn very little of the real England unless they bring some knowledge of English history and literature with them, and are thus led to study also the great unchanging background of English life and character that is written on the face of every Englishman, in London clubs or third-class carriages or village inns, as well as in his organised social and political activities, for those who have eyes to read it.

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Let the reader, then, who is interested in foreign countries be critical of writers who can tell him only of the foreground. There is almost always some element of truth in a book or article on any foreign subject; but truth is of little value when it is so encrusted with error that it needs an expert to extract it. Yet this is precisely the situation into which irresponsible methods of propaganda and journalism are in danger of bringing us. The voices of honest and capable writers who are trying to educate the public are lost in the din of conflicting partisans. To avoid treading on sensitive corns, let me take a pre-War instance. The old Magyar Government, whose unscrupulous and tyrannical policy was one of the main causes of the Great War, was extremely skilful in devising means for persuading the reading public in Britain and the United States that Hungary was a home of constitutional freedom on the British model. It was due mainly to the knowledge, persistence, and integrity of one man, Mr Seton-Watson; that the Magyar bubble was pricked and that British public opinion, or such part of it as took an interest in Austria-Hungary, became enlightened before the War as to the true nature of the Magyar Government. There are a great many Governments, new and old, in Europe and Asia at the present time which are quite as much under the domination of tyrannical ideas as the Hungary of Stefan Tisza. Some of them the reader will encounter in this book. But how is the ordinary British reader to distinguish the sheep from the goats? How is he to know how much of what he

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hears about 'ancient cultural traditions,' 'the rights of small nations,' 'the voice of the working masses,' etc., is bluff or hypocrisy or propaganda, and how much represents a genuine and responsible body of opinion? There is no other way just now, it seems to me, than by the spread of well-informed, well-balanced, and, at the same time, vivid and human, accounts by social students such as that of Mr Bechhofer; and it is one of the most regrettable facts of the present chaotic situation that it is so difficult for the ordinary, unattached, disinterested observer of men and things to move about the world freely and to bring back his freight of living knowledge.

Of the actual contents of this book I will say little. It enjoys the distinction of being the only account that has so far appeared by an independent observer of conditions in non-Bolshevist Russia and Transcaucasia since the Revolution. This alone would entitle it to rank as a historical document of some value in days when history is being lost and faked almost as quickly as it is being made. It is, for instance, almost by chance that the shameful events surrounding the surrender and death of Admiral Kolchak have been made known to the British public; and the complete history of the Volunteer Army, of which Mr Bechhofer gives us some glimpses, will probably never be written. Historical documents need not always be dull, in spite of the many efforts of the scientific school to promulgate that belief; and Mr Bechhofer is too much alive and too many-sided in his interests and observations to be dull

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if he tried. No one who has read his account of the evacuation of the South Russian towns will be able easily to forget it. Nor will they be able to go on regarding the Armenians with the benevolent and patronising indifference which it has become customary to bestow on them, or to echo the advice lately given them by a high authority in this country to take up arms and thereby make themselves respected by their neighbours.

The book has one other quality that is conspicuously wanting in many present-day books about Russia. Mr Bechhofer has a deep love for Russia. This enables him to understand and to convey to British readers something of what Russians who love their country and value what it has given to Europe and to the world are thinking about its present condition. What he has to say, or leaves unsaid but not unexpressed, about British policy in Russia and the Transcaucasus will not all be pleasant reading to those who care for the honour of their country. Here, as elsewhere, we have raised hopes and disappointed them; and, what is worse, we have given pledges and broken them. But it is time that the British people faced the real facts, dishonouring though they are, about our conduct both towards the Russians and towards the Armenians, just as it is time that we realised that the indemnity provisions of the Treaty of Versailles constitute as real a breach of the Agreement of November 5th, 1918, between the Allied and German Governments as the German invasion of Belgium did of the Belgian Treaty of 1839. It is disagreeable to realise these things,

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and that is why, according to a familiar law of human nature, British public opinion prefers to run away from them. It is very difficult, so I am told, to get anything about Armenia into print at all nowadays, except at one's own expense. But until we are thoroughly aware of the blots that we have allowed our rulers to make on our national honour, we shall be able neither to make such amends as are still possible for our perfidy nor to call our rulers to account. Mr Bechhofer's book should at least help British public opinion to advance one stage in this salutary process.

ALFRED E. ZIMMERN.

Maentwrog,
Merionethshire, *July*, 1920.

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CHAPTER I
THE BRITISH IN BATUM

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CHAPTER I

THE BRITISH IN BATUM

CONSTANTINOPLE is now the extreme limit of civilisation in the Middle East. As you steam out of Constantinople up the Bosphorus and into the Black Sea, you are warned to put your watch forward half an hour or so a day, in order to keep up with the sun. This is very curious, because under present conditions you ought to put the clock back at least forty years for every day's progress eastward. In Russia to-day, and in the Transcaucasian provinces which, until the end of 1917, were Russian territory, the atmosphere of civilisation grows rarer and rarer as one moves along, and life becomes more primitive, selfish, and terrible. There you are out of the world, as we knew it before the war and know it now. Returning recently to England after eight months in the South of Russia and the Caucasus, I felt as if I had returned from beyond the grave.

My first place of call in South Russia was Batum, where I spent several months when I was learning Russian in 1915. Batum, as not too many people in England know, is a port on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, ceded to Russia by Turkey after the Russo-Turkish war forty years ago. It is the terminus of the railways from Baku, Tiflis, and Erivan, and is thus the

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port for Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, and North-West Persia. The oil-pipe from Baku runs beside the railway to Batum, and the latter has always been the place whence the Baku oil has been shipped to Europe. The Batum Province itself, though rich, is small and comparatively unexploited; and Batum has served principally as a clearing-house for the interior of Transcaucasia. It is the key to the Caspian route to Persia; the Shah passed through it on his recent visit to Europe. Except, then, that it is the gate of the Transcaucasus towards Europe, Batum would not be a place of great interest, were it not for the extraordinary medley of people who live in it, and for the beauty of the surrounding country. The population of the Batum Province bears witness to its far-reaching connexions. First there are the Russians, the survivors and successors of those who took Batum from the Turks at the end of the 'seventies and transformed it from a miserable fishing village of a few hundred souls into a flourishing port. Ever since it became Russian, Batum has been a fortified place, and the chief section of its population has been the Russian civil and military residents. These and other Russian colonists own most of the orange and tea plantations along the sea-coast; they made them with their own hands from the forests among which formerly a few Turkish and Kurdish hovels were scattered. The right to own land along the sea-coast was, for military reasons, almost exclusively reserved, before the War, for Russians of good standing and their relatives. They are

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clinging desperately to the little that remains of their shattered fortunes. And these plantations of tea, oranges, lemons, mandarines, bamboo, fruit and flowers do them credit. Nor may we condemn the administrative ability of these Russian colonists. Whatever they may now be reduced to, the Russians, before the War, maintained peace and order in the mountainous and wild Transcaucasus, a cauldron of unrest. For this feat of administration they deserve all honour. We are so accustomed in England to accuse the bad side of the old Russian administration that we have never learned properly to appreciate the great feats of their colonial officials, particularly in these parts. Bitter recent experience in territories that formerly were administered by Russia has taught many people, however, to give these precursors their due.

The Turkish frontier is only about forty miles south of the town; consequently there have always been a certain number of Turks in the Batum Province. At the beginning of the War a Turkish Army advanced into the Province with the hope of re-taking Batum for Turkey. In this unsuccessful attack they were assisted by the Turks from inside. I remember hearing, five years ago, how the best gardeners in the tea and orange plantations—Turks to a man—all disappeared a day or two before war was declared, and how they returned into the Province soon after at the head of regiments, some of them full colonels, and one even a prince!

Besides the Russians and the Turks, there are the Georgians, an ancient Christian people—a

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'handsome but worthless people,' Gibbon cruelly calls them—who have now a State of their own, with its capital at Tiflis. I shall have a great deal to relate of the Georgians. But the most numerous people in the Batum Province, more especially in the hills, are the Adjarians, who are Mohammedans of mixed blood. They have recently developed a small degree of national self-consciousness; but for the most part they persist in calling and considering themselves Turks. Then there are many Persians—all the fruiterers in Batum are Persians—distinguishable by their long robes and skull caps and their henna-dyed beards. And there are Kurds, and Adjarians who call themselves Kurds, to the indignation of the wild and magnificent originals. Every spring these people muster their tribes and wander off to their pastures in the mountains. They are all gaudily dressed; and the procession of veiled women and white-bearded veterans on horseback—often two or more to each scraggy pony—of innumerable children, more or less naked, of men armed to the teeth and eager-eyed for booty, and of herds of cattle, thin from the privations of the winter, is a picturesque sight. But it behoves every planter to be watchful when the Kurds are on the move. They are unblushing thieves, and their progress creates pandemonium all along their route.

And there are in Batum thousands of Greeks, both merchants of the town and peasants in the hills; Armenians, rich business men and poor labourers; Tartars; Assyrians; Jews; Chinamen from Manchuria, speaking pidgin Russian;

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Gurians, Lesghians, Circassians, and representatives of dozens of other Caucasian tribes, Christian or Mohammedan. To-day, in consequence of the desolation of much of the rest of the Middle East, Batum contains thousands of refugees of many peoples. After a day or two in Batum any reference to the 'Caucasian race' seems paradoxical.

The beauty of Batum is well known. Local report describes it as the third most beautiful place in the world; I do not know where the other two are and often I doubt their existence. For Batum at its best is extraordinarily lovely. Green fertile hills lead down to a tideless sea; behind them stretch the eternal snows of the Caucasian ranges in a marvellous crescent that dwarfs Batum on its peninsula. Every plant and tree in the world, beneficent or evil, seems to grow here; Nature and the planters have multiplied species beyond all counting. Roses grow in abundance; the place is covered with them during the summer and autumn. They are very easy to propagate. If your neighbour has a fine variety you clandestinely snip off a branch with your garden scissors, carried for convenience up your sleeve, bring it home and put it in a box of damp sand in the open air. In a week or two it sprouts roots and then you plant it.

I landed in Batum in the beginning of November, 1919. No one on the way—I had come out leisurely by boat through Liverpool, Algiers, Malta, Smyrna, and Constantinople—was able to tell me for certain who was in control of Batum.

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Some said the Georgians ruled it; others were certain that an English garrison was there.

The American authorities at Constantinople, always obliging, allowed me to make the journey from Constantinople to Batum on one of their destroyers; consequently, there was no passport examination on landing. I walked down from the quay where the destroyer was oiling into the town. Little seemed changed from five years before. There were the same bazaars, the same varied and picturesque people, as little busy as ever, the same Russian officials in their uniforms and caps, the same rain, which fortunately soon stopped, and the same heat. I noticed a few English soldiers at the railway station. In a wayside café I met an old acquaintance. He is a Gurian, *i.e.*, a kind of Georgian, who for years has kept a little shop near a wayside railway-station where the planters make their daily purchases of bread and meat. During the last nine or ten years he has grown progressively richer, until now, besides his shop, he owns a couple of plantations, manages three or four others whose owners are on the Russian front, or too busy in the town to be able to attend to them, or are missing—perhaps dead—somewhere within the sinister confines of Bolshevist Russia; has bought a sawing-machine and cuts down forests and sells logs and planks; besides which he is interested in almost every transaction that takes place in the neighbourhood. He thoroughly earns his success; for he is the most capable man for miles round. If ever any one wants a matter arranged, it is, 'Send for Ambrosiy;

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he'll know how to do it.' He makes you pay, either directly or indirectly, for the service; but by hook or crook—he is never in trouble with the authorities—he gets it done. When I was in Batum before, Ambrosiy did me the honour to regard me also as an energetic individual—the distinction is not hard to come by in Russia—and we met with warmth.

'Nothing has changed,' he told me; 'we had a sort of Bolshevists here, and there are still plenty of robbers about. Things have been very bad—the rouble is worth only what a kopeck was before—but they are getting better again now that the British are here.'

'The British!' I said; 'but, surely, they nearly all left here long ago.'

Ambrosiy smiled. 'They left Tiflis,' he said, 'and Baku; but we have a British occupation in the Batum Province.'

He referred me to a notice on the wall of the café, which declared the Batum Province to be under temporary British occupation, and the town of Batum itself under martial law.

Soon I heard all the news. After the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Russian armies in the Transcaucasus, who for three years had outfought the Turks in this wild country, melted away in an undisciplined retreat back into European Russia. I gather that a kind of soldiers' Soviet existed in Batum for a little while, but it does not seem to have had much opportunity for action. When the soldiers had passed off, plundering as they went, Georgian troops occupied the Province.

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The various deputies who had been elected to the ill-fated Russian Constituent Assembly by the population of the Transcaucasus joined together after the triumph of the Bolshevists in Central Russia and, on February 23, 1918, established a 'Seim' or Diet to carry on the affairs of the country. An armistice was arranged with the Turks, who, however, to the consternation of the verbose but rather ingenuous Transcaucasian politicians, soon violated it on various grounds. There followed the Brest-Litovsk Treaty between the Bolshevists and the Central Powers, by which the districts of Batum, Kars, and Ardahan were ceded to Turkey; the Seim refused to acknowledge the Treaty, but its resistance collapsed. The Georgian troops in Batum—a 'rag-time' force, some of my friends called them—ran away with great precipitation before a very much smaller advanced force of Turks; besides which, it was locally rumoured that the Georgian politicians sold the town to Turkey. On May 26, 1918, the Seim collapsed into its parts; some of which, representing Mohammedan sections of the Transcaucasus, were by no means hostile to the Turkish invaders; and out of the ruins there emerged several new states: Georgia, with its capital at Tiflis; Azerbaijan, at Baku; and Armenia, at Erivan. After the taking of Batum, the Turks began to advance upon Tiflis. Georgian politics now took on a pro-German cast. A German mission appeared at Tiflis, and a Georgian mission went to Berlin. Georgia declared its independence of Russia and acknowledged the Brest-Litovsk Treaty as

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conditions of a German alliance.[1] One of the clauses of the secret German-Georgian agreement was that the Turks should not be allowed to enter Tiflis. It is related that a Turkish armoured train, advancing upon Georgia through ravished Armenia, was met by a German armoured train, running on the same line but in the opposite direction, and the German commander sternly ordered the Turks to advance no further in that direction. Thus, Georgian deceit and German duplicity saved

[1] A proclamation to the Allies issued by the Georgian Parliament in the spring of 1920 contained the following statement:

'Luckily for Georgia, the victory of the Allies annulled the treaty of Brest-Litovsk. Georgia did not participate in this treaty: on the contrary, it fought on the side of the Allies and was practically the ally of the Entente.'

The Georgian Parliament forgot that the Georgian delegates to the Trebizond conference acknowledged the Brest-Litovsk Treaty on April 10, 1918, and that there was a still unpublished agreement between the Georgians and the Germans from the very moment of Georgia's declaration of independence in May, 1918, which step, indeed, was decided on as one of the conditions of German support.

In supporting the Georgian claims to Armenian territory in the autumn of 1918, General Kress, the head of the German troops in the Transcaucasus, said: '*Germany, as an ally, has engaged itself to support the Georgian claims.*'

In view of some of the later phases of the Georgian Government's policy, a pamphlet issued in English by anonymous Georgian Nationalists at Zurich as far back as 1916 ('Georgia and the War') is of some interest. Together with the usual propagandist claims —a map of Georgia includes territory as far remote as Lazistan and Trebizond!—the statement is made that, 'The war which has broken out between Turkey and Russia affords the Georgian people the best means of acquiring again the political freedom which they lost a hundred years ago. With this in mind, Georgia has grasped the hand of Turkey and her great Allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary, in order to join with them in carrying on the war against Russia.' The moral of the pamphlet is that, 'If we, with her [Germany's] help, succeed in obtaining our liberty, she will have no better friends than us—real friends, *without any hypocrisy, from which we Georgians are free.* We wish to learn how to think and to labour in the German manner, and hope that in a short time our masters will be able to be proud of their pupils.' (My italics.)

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Georgia from a Turkish occupation. Not that the Turks behaved badly at Batum. On the contrary, they were on their very best behaviour. They kept order by Eastern methods; that is, they bastinadoed the headman of any village that caused trouble. In this way they reduced turbulent Batum to such a state of order that the town and the Province became a dead place. Whoever could, fled into the interior; those who could not, shut themselves inside their houses and waited for time to release them. The chief streets of Batum became a pasture for horses and sheep; all the shops were shut, and the town became indescribably filthy. The Germans in Tiflis, too, were on their best behaviour, but with rather less drastic results than the Turks achieved. Every man, from the General commanding to the rawest private, behaved his very best. Doubtless, had contrary orders been given, they would all have behaved their very worst. However that may be, their extraordinarily good conduct is remembered to this day in the Transcaucasus (as also in South Russia), and is contrasted with the relaxed post-War discipline of the Allies.[1] Meanwhile, on the Eastern Fronts, the War turned in our favour; at last came the victory of the Allies, and, by the Armistice terms with Turkey, British troops came to occupy the Transcaucasus.[2] At Batum they

[1] In the very first week that the British troops were in Batum, a Russian General was shot dead in the street by a drunken Scotchman—a most unfortunate beginning.

[2] 'Clause 15. Allied control officers to be placed on all railways, including such portions of the Transcaucasian railways now under Turkish control, which must be placed at the free and complete

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found 20,000 Turks. The larger part were despatched to Constantinople by sea; the Turkish officers embezzled the money and provisions designed for these men, who were fed with nothing better than a few handfuls of nuts and died like flies all the way to Constantinople. The rest of the Turks were sent back to Trebizond by road. The headquarters of the German military mission were at Tiflis. They were ordered to surrender; but the commander, General Kress, refused, and retired to the hill-town of Kutaïs, saying that he would wait to be fetched. However, they were got rid of at last, and the British occupation of the Transcaucasus began.

With the withdrawal of the Turks, the Transcaucasian republics began their existence as really independent States. Every race, nation, tribe, and clan had been clamouring, intriguing, and fighting to assert its independence and humble the pretensions of its neighbours and rivals. And, since the Caucasus is as full of little people as a cheese is of mites, the result was a most unholy state of confusion. The smaller the people, the bigger its appetite and the louder and more barefaced its demands. The three republics of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan stood out above the smaller independencies of the country. The first, encompassed on all sides with its inveterate

disposal of the Allied authorities, due consideration being given to the needs of the population. This clause to include Allied occupation of Batum. Turkey will raise no objection to the occupation of Baku by the Allies.'

As usual, when there was hard work to be done and nothing much to be gained, British troops had to do the work of all the Allies.

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enemies, Tartars and Kurds, set on by Turkish agents, and with callous neighbours, was fighting a long struggle for existence. The Georgians, for example, whose State bounds Armenia on the north, claimed some territory which, by all ethnological rules, belonged to Armenia. The two peoples came to blows in December, 1918, and, to the astonishment of those who supposed the Armenians to be a race of degraded moneymakers, these routed the Georgians, and would, perhaps, have captured Tiflis, the Georgian capital, had not the Allies intervened.[1]

In general, however, Armenia was too busy with its own concerns to have any time to interfere with its neighbours', and she must be acquitted of most of the political faults of which the other Transcaucasian republics have been guilty.

'The Free and Independent Social-Democratic State of Georgia' will always remain in my memory as a classic example of an imperialist 'small nation.' Both in territory-snatching outside and bureaucratic tyranny inside, its chauvinism was beyond all bounds. When I arrived in Batum, for example, I found that a decree had just been published at Tiflis, to the effect that all non-Georgian subjects residing in Tiflis, but not owning houses or engaged in trade or in the Government service, were to leave the country within fourteen days. This was ostensibly directed against speculators, but, inasmuch as it followed upon a long

[1] A British officer and a dozen privates went along the railway between the two armies and signalled with white flags for a parley. They were received by no less than sixteen Georgian generals. ('We are all generals nowadays,' one of these remarked.)

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and organised campaign against the non-Georgian elements—especially Russians, many of whom were born and bred in Tiflis, and whose families had lived there for generations—who had been consecutively harried out of their administrative work and had had their houses and trade requisitioned from them, the decree was equivalent to expelling all non-Georgians from Georgia. Fortunately, I learned, the British authorities at Batum, whither all these unfortunates would have had to come, had raised vigorous objections to this high-handed measure, and it was hoped that their complaints would prevail. As a matter of fact, this is how things turned out. First, the Georgian Government postponed the date mentioned in the decree; and then they let the whole matter be forgotten.

The Tartar Azerbaijan Government at Baku was suspected to be under the thumb of the Turks, although it was making a loud cry of independence.

Both the Georgian and Azerbaijan Governments were working hard against General Denikin behind the scenes, while, however, publicly professing neutrality in the struggle between him and the Bolshevists. The swarming new bureaucracies in both States saw the best hope of their survival in the failure of Denikin to secure the re-union of Russia; and alien influences were at work to confirm them in their hostility to him. Denikin, for his part, refused to acknowledge the independence of either Georgia or Azerbaijan; but he

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recognised that of Armenia and remained on friendly terms with her.[1]

Baku was evacuated by the British troops in June-July, 1919, and Tiflis in July-August; and in August orders were given to withdraw from Batum also. The Italians were expected to take over the Caucasus; but, in view of their home situation, they had declined. All preparations were made to evacuate the Province; transports stood in the harbour of Batum; surplus stores and animals were sold; then, at the last moment, a telegram was received countermanding the previous order. And so the British remained.[2] At first the administration of Batum was left in the hands of a local council, chosen to correspond as far as possible with the miscellaneous elements of the population. This council soon became notorious as a centre of corrupt inefficiency. Following a strike of the local dock workers, which arose out of the closure by the British military authorities of a provocatively anti-British newspaper, the Council and the British Military Governor disputed who was the ultimate authority in the Province. To settle the

[1] Several Englishmen have expressed to me their surprise that General Denikin did not try to win over Georgia and Azerbaijan by professing to recognise their independence; he could, later on, they say, have repudiated his action. The answer to this suggestion is that Denikin was undoubtedly too much of a soldier and too little of a politician to be able to adopt it.

[2] The garrison of Batum was composed of the 80th Infantry Brigade, under Brigadier-General Cooke-Collis, who was also Military Governor. The forces consisted of a brigade of the 27th Division, and was a part of the Army of the Black Sea, with headquarters at Constantinople. Constantinople was the channel of communication with England; but the Foreign Office had its representative at Tiflis (Mr Wardrop), and 'formulated policy.' There were, in all, about 800 English troops and 1,200 Punjabis.

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matter, a number of British officers—most of them, like the Governor himself, Irishmen—were marched one fine morning to the various offices of the administration, and relieved the members of the Council of their easy but profitable duties. These officers were not professional administrators; they were simply a selected few of the officers of the British troops who had been sent to keep order in the Transcaucasus. For various reasons, I learnt to my surprise, the British administration had managed to make itself rather unpopular. I had one or two acquaintances among the British officers in Batum, and I was astonished by the lack of mutual understanding between them and the Russians. The British officers were, on the whole, as decent and capable a lot of men as one could hope ever to meet. But for some reason or other they figured in the popular eye as thieves and scoundrels. They were mostly unaware of the feeling about them. It was notorious even to them that the Civil Governor, a Colonel, was unpopular; this was, they said, because he was a Jew. Few of the other British officers knew that they were nearly as much disliked. Everybody wanted us to stay in Batum; but everybody, or nearly everybody, was full of tales about the shortcomings of our administration. So far as I was able to discover, most of the offences that were supposed to have been committed by the British authorities never took place at all; the Russians were always a suspicious people where authorities were concerned, and their present misfortunes have made them quicker than ever to

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take offence and to hand on news of it. Of the actual wrongs that were done in Batum during the Occupation—and these, it must be remembered, are infinitesimal beside the good acts, great and small, that were performed by the occupying forces—most were committed, I am positive, by the intermediaries whom our people had to employ. None of the British officers who were so unexpectedly called upon to take over the government of the Batum Province from the corrupt and slothful local administration had any knowledge of the Russian language or of Russian life. Interpreters had to be sought locally, and a collection of Levantines and Jews, with a sprinkling of Russian ex-officers, were the link between the well-intentioned administration and the very dissatisfied population. In such a place as Batum, and at such a time, there was too much temptation for many of these intermediaries to be able to preserve an English morality in the execution of their duties. Rumour, of course, charged the British heads with cognisance of the misdeeds of their subordinates. An old lady of my acquaintance, for example, once had to call upon one of our officials. Before she was permitted to enter his room, his interpreter tried to obtain a bribe from her. She refused to give it, and insisted upon being shown in. I asked her why she did not report this to the officer. 'Oh,' she replied, 'I thought he knew!' It was not until I was able to bring this officer out to lunch one day at her bungalow that she realised her error. But none the less, while I was in Batum, we saw interpreters

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resigning their jobs and buying theatres, and so on, undoubtedly with the money they had obtained illegitimately at their work. Nor, I regret to say, were some of our own people in minor jobs proof against offered bribes. I was loath at first to believe this, although many Russians whom I could trust claimed to have first-hand experience of it. Certainly I was surprised when an Adjarian offered to sell me some Army blankets, and, at my query where he had got them, replied that he had bought them from an English sergeant. But one day, after a long conversation with an agitated Russian who was full of complaints about the behaviour of our troops generally, I was returning home when I happened to be delayed in the company of some British soldiers in charge of a small 'control' office. After a while I asked, in a casual tone:

'Had any bribes lately?'

'Oh, yes, a few, now and then,' was the smiling answer. And they meant it seriously. Not without effect is the tale told on every transport sailing for Russia and at every port on the way out, that Russia is the country where much money is to be made by smart men. The Jewish merchants from Odessa were not the only speculators.

The best way to make our administration really successful and popular would have been to bring to Batum people who had some knowledge of the Russian language and Russian ways. But the British at Batum could not do this by themselves, and the superior authorities who decided upon the staffing of Batum did not seem sufficiently

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interested in our occupation to trouble to send expert assistance. Little or nothing was done to help General Cooke-Collis and his subordinates. Neither decent communications, nor supplies and assistance, were vouchsafed from Constantinople. As a result, much of their work went for nothing, and their endeavours were largely nullified by the abuses that they were unable to keep out. From the General downwards, the British officers at Batum were efficient in their unaccustomed work; only a very few real blunders spoiled their record. But, when nobody knew, least of all the British, how long we were to remain in Batum, or to whom, supposing we went away, the Province would be entrusted, how could one expect the local population to co-operate in exposing and clearing away the abuses of the administration? It might have been more than any one's life was worth to disclose Bolshevist or Georgian intrigues or the shortcomings of local members of the administration, since revenge was certain to follow our withdrawal. Consequently, the situation went from bad to worse. I had the advantage of seeing things from both the British and the local points of view, and it was a sad spectacle of misunderstood and often misdirected effort. However, it would be wrong to take too dismal a view of the British occupation. Whatever its shortcomings, it at least kept the peace. When I arrived in Batum, some lunatics among the Russians decided that I was an official investigator in disguise, and poured out their complaints to me. These were, as I have said, usually unfounded, but the general spectacle of

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mistrust and falling prestige was surprising and very unpleasant. It was only by comparison with the shamelessly corrupt remnants of the Russian administration that we shone.

Here are two experiences that happened to me. I called in one day at the British court. A British Major was trying a case of 'robbery with violence.' His interpreter was a London East-End Jew, whose knowledge of Russian was ludicrously insufficient. The defendant was trying to prove an alibi, but his effort was thwarted by the interpreter's ignorance of Russian. This person's capacity was shown when he translated the ordinary Russian word for a violin as 'a kind of a banjo.'

The next day I called at the Russian court to inquire when the case of some robbers who had broken into the bungalow of one of my Russian friends seven months before would be tried. When, after many delays, the papers bearing on the case were found, I was gravely informed that one of the prisoners, who had been released on bail, had absconded, and that, until his answer to the preliminary case of the prosecution could be filed, nothing further could be done in the matter. This was a little too much for my patience, and my threat to report the matter to the British authorities had the effect of bringing the case forward for immediate trial. As I afterwards heard (for I was in Rostov when the trial was held), the two remaining defendants were found guilty and sent to prison, and the victim of the robbery had her only remaining shawl stolen in court while she was giving evidence!

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I soon revised my first impression that little had changed during the five years since I had last been in Batum. There was quite a different atmosphere to the place. To begin with, it was breathless with what is known generically in Russia as 'speculation.' The shop-windows were sparsely filled with goods, but instead notices were stuck upon them inviting offers for parcels of caviare, tea, quinine (then unobtainable at chemists' shops in this fever-ridden place), mandarines, clothes, etc., that were stated to be on sale in the advertisers' warehouses. In the comparative absence of trade in the Transcaucasus in those days, owing to the abnormal political and financial conditions, 'speculation' was the main industry of the place. Deals were made in everything. Nothing arrived from the rich surroundings of the city or from its various neighbours or in the boats from Constantinople but was gambled with by these speculators and sold and resold over and over again before it reached the consumer. Half the traders of Odessa, a particularly nasty breed, seemed to be in Batum, taking advantage of the situation to pile up riches at the expense of the rest of us.

When I passed through Constantinople on my way to Batum I met in a café a Russian whom I had known in London. Casually I inquired if there was any letter or other communication I could carry to Batum for him. To my amazement, he replied, 'Well, I have got a parcel of medicines I want to send through to Batum, but, thank

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you very much—you know, nowadays one does not trust one's own brother!'

There was never a finer field for the speculator than was afforded by the money crisis in Batum. To understand the situation the reader must realise that there was no currency that was good over the whole of South Russia and the Transcaucasus. All the money used was paper, of course. The old Russian Imperial roubles, the so-called 'Nicholas' notes, were scarce and were valued at a much higher rate than any of the new issues. Not so high, but, still, better than the new issues, were the 'Kerensky' notes, printed by the Kerensky Government in 1917. In Batum two sorts of paper money were in general use, neither of which was really worth very much and was constantly varying in value. These were the 'Don roubles' issued in General Denikin's territory in South Russia, and the so-called 'Transcaucasian bonds' which had been issued by the Transcaucasian Diet and were supposed to be jointly guaranteed by Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, and to be currency in all three States. But the printing of these joint notes had ceased, and each of the three States had started to print its own currencies as well. The Transcaucasian bonds were at a premium over all their local issues. The British authorities tried to bring order into the exchange by definitely stating that Don and Transcaucasian roubles were to be accepted as legal tender and as equivalent in value; but with the depreciation of the Don roubles during the winter, this arrangement fell through, and was soon broken by the

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authorities themselves.[1] The Georgian, Azerbaijan, and Armenian currency notes were, of course, legal tender only in their own countries.

The air was full of exchanges and talk of exchanges. Half the shops in the town had been transformed into money-exchanges. Speculators used to buy Don roubles cheap in Batum; run up to Novorossisk, where, as it was Denikin territory, the Don rouble stood high and Transcaucasian roubles were unknown; buy English pounds there and hurry back to Batum and convert these back at a profit into Don roubles, repeating the operation *ad infinitum*. A pleasant change was sometimes made by including Constantinople (and Turkish pounds) or Tiflis (and Georgian roubles) in the itinerary. Needless to say, what was done with roubles was done with goods also.

To add to other troubles, there was a famine of small change. The kopeck, the 11,100th part of a rouble, had, of course, disappeared from the scene. The rouble (pre-Revolution value—two shillings) was now the smallest unit of currency. The automatic cash registers had all been made for roubles and kopecks, but now they were used

[1] With the subsequent defeat of the Volunteer Army, 'Don roubles' became practically unnegotiable in Batum. In January, 1920, the British Civil Governor, Colonel Harris, suddenly cancelled the use of this money for the purchase of bread, which was an administrative monopoly. As all servants of the administration had just been paid in this money, it led to a riot on January 12, and the Civil Administration offices were raided by a mob of dockers and porters. The British officers in the building (known to their friends as 'the City Fathers') left by the back-doors and windows, amid a fusillade of stones and typewriting accessories. Several shops in the main streets were rushed; and troops had to be called out. Forty-five arrests were made, each prisoner receiving a sentence of three months' hard labour.

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for roubles and hundreds of roubles. And the rouble had fallen below the old value of the kopeck; that is to say, the purchasing value of the rouble was *less than a farthing*. The result of this decline, which continued daily, was terrible. It led to the almost entire submergence of the old classes and the rise of a new plutocracy whose wealth was in most cases due to speculation with food and the other necessaries of their starving neighbours.

Imagine a Russian family, with savings in roubles that used to be equivalent to £700. They now possessed in all the equivalent of £7! Of course, salaries had increased to some extent with the fall in the rouble; it need not be said, however, that the rise in the cost of living had far outstripped—by twenty times, say—the attempts of the unhappy population to keep up with it. As a result thousands of Russians in Batum alone had seen their means reduced to nothing and had been brought down to poverty at a time when it was impossible for them to hope to remedy their case by honest means. In any restaurant in Batum you could see ladies of good family and education waiting upon speculators and their prostitute companions, while outside in the rain a Russian officer, too badly wounded, too demoralised or too much bound by family ties to be able to join Denikin's army, could be seen carrying the portmanteau of a fat Odessa merchant, who had just brought off a fine speculative deal with the currency, with foodstuffs or with clothing or drugs.

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A few fortunate people, of course, managed somehow to float like corks upon the top of the flood, but in the main the Russians who had given the world the Russian civilisation and culture that we know went under. An hour in Batum would have proved to the most optimistic inquirer that the new plutocracy did not compare well with the classes it had supplanted. The position of the latter was desperate.

I knew a planter who at Christmas sold his mandarine crop for the year, on which he hoped to carry on until the summer, for 120,000 Don roubles, equivalent then to about £120. By the time he received the money, the Don rouble had depreciated so much in the exchange in Batum that the sum was not worth more than perhaps £20.

An amusing trick came to light in the early days of the occupation. There was an official Army rate of exchange between English money and roubles. The authorities were anxious not to flood the Transcaucasus with English money, so they arranged to pay the troops in roubles, according to this official rate, which was, however, always much lower than the market rate. You could get a thousand roubles in the bazaars for a 'Bradbury,' whereas the Army Paymaster would pay you at the official rate of only 400 roubles for every pound of your Army pay. Consequently, until the Military Governor stopped the practice, bright British soldiers would get their relatives in England to send them out a few 'Bradburys,' which they would exchange in the bazaar at the

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'speculative rate.' With these roubles they would go to the Army Post Office and purchase British postal orders at the Army rate of exchange. In this manner they were able to pay back the loan to their relatives, and to turn a profit of about 100 per cent. or more on the transaction.

For months, until the official rate was altered to correspond with the market rate of exchange, no officer or man in Batum drew a penny of Army pay if he could help it. He allowed his pay to accumulate, and for immediate needs he cashed cheques or Bradburys. Unfortunately, a series of bad cheques depressed that side of the exchange, and to my sorrow I discovered that my (admittedly) perfectly good cheques were worth on the exchange little more than half what I got for the one or two Bradburys I had brought with me in my pocketbook.

The only effective way to get rid of all these difficulties, or at least the worse part of them, would have been to issue a local currency. I know that General Cooke-Collis, the Governor, urged this course, but it was turned down by the superior authorities overseas. After all, when nobody knew how long the British occupation of Batum was to continue, there was not much point in issuing a British-guaranteed currency. And the people at Constantinople were known to be hostile to the retention of troops at Batum.

The British troops might have justified their little lapses from strict financial virtue, *e.g.*, the Bradbury-changing trick, by the fact that their rations in the early winter of 1919 were shamefully

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insufficient. They were practically on quarter rations, owing chiefly to the bad communications between Batum and Constantinople, and partly, I fancy—though this is officially denied—for the more glorious reason that part of the already insufficient food supplies was used to save some of the more destitute refugees, of whom there were many thousands in the town, from sheer starvation. Some idea of the careless inefficiency of Constantinople[1] may be got from the case of the 'Hunts Castle.' When I passed through Constantinople I was told that this boat, which had already been delayed there for some time, was now really on the point of sailing to Batum and Novorossisk with urgent foodstuffs and other supplies for our various forces in South Russia. All the time I remained in Batum this wretched boat was expected to arrive. November passed and still it did not come. Batum, with 120,000 inhabitants and refugees in the place of its usual 20,000, and with few local food supplies, was almost starving. But Constantinople did not send the 'Hunts Castle,' which lay in the Bosphorus eating its head off. On December 9th, if I am not mistaken, it did arrive at Batum at last. The explanation for its coming was given us as follows: Annoyed by the constant complaints from Batum and Novorossisk, one of the numerous British Generals at Constantinople went down to where the 'Hunts Castle' was lying, and ordered it to proceed in 48 hours, refusing to listen to all the

[1] The 'great Constantinople muddle,' then and now, lies outside the scope of this book, but it deserves a volume to itself.

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excuses that had served until then to keep it from sailing. And so it sailed. When it arrived at Novorossisk, a large part of the cargo of stores was found to have been looted, but, anyhow, there was something for the British troops for Christmas. The canteen was, for the British soldier, both his chief joy and source of profit. He used to spend there at least twice as much money as he ever possessed, the surplus being for purchases made by him for and on behalf of the local population, which for some years had tasted little sugar and less jam.

I had many old friends, Russians and Georgians, in the neighbourhood on whom I was desirous to call. One Russian planter in particular I was anxious to meet again. He was an old revolutionary, who had held an important post on some Imperial estates in Central Russia until, at the outbreak of the first and unsuccessful revolution in 1905, he had hoisted the red flag over his office and issued a revolutionary proclamation to his employees. When the revolutionary outbreak was suppressed, he had been dismissed and banished to the Transcaucasus, where I met him in 1915, and learned much about the revolutionary movement in Russia.

I went out to see him, and found him at his plantation. It was a delight to look again at the ordered rows of mandarines and lemons on the long slope of the hill, the charming paths that wound beneath the palms and pines, these so much taller than when I had last seen them, the shed I had seen him build for his horses and the

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other for his bullocks—all his animals had, of course, been commandeered by various armies in the last two years—the little vegetable garden, the numerous chestnuts that were being saved for planks for a projected new bungalow, and the old familiar two-storeyed bungalow, with its flowers and vines around it. One looked down on either side of the hill upon the sea and the distant ring of snow. On the one side lay Batum, squat upon its peninsula; far away, in the other direction, might be vaguely discerned the fever marshes of Poti. All round was the jungle of the hills, broken only by the ordered greenness of the Russian and Greek plantations, the Russian ones along the coast, the Greek more in the interior. I asked my friend what he thought of the Russian Revolution of 1917-18. He replied, 'It was the greatest curse that has ever befallen Russia.' This, from a former revolutionary, was surprising. But I was to hear the same opinion many more times during my journey.

At a friend's house in the town I met an interesting Russian. He was a tall young man, with handsome and energetic features. You could tell at the first glance that he was a man who could be trusted. But there was a look of suffering in his face. I learned that he had spent his life as a naval officer, and had been considered one of the most promising young officers in the Russian Fleet. During the War he had won several decorations for bravery. It appeared that, immediately after the outbreak of the Revolution, he had been threatened one night as he was going

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on watch. One of the crew of his boat had raised a revolver to shoot him, but had lowered it, abashed at the calm glance of his commander. Next day the officer was transferred to the Black Sea fleet. For a long time he had wondered why he should have been threatened by his crew, when, as he had had a hundred opportunities of proving, he was extremely popular with them. The mystery was not cleared up until much later, when, at Rostov, he met the man who had threatened him walking arm in arm with a member of the German Naval Staff. It may be accepted as true that the Germans took advantage of the outbreak of the Russian Revolution to remove many of the men whose work they considered dangerous to themselves. The Bolshevist triumph caught this officer at Sevastopol. The Red Terror was then raging; and for several months he and his wife—he had married about this time!—dared not undress or go to bed at night for fear his death-summons should come. They lived in a room in a friend's flat at the top of a tall building. They never went out. One night a Red patrol searched the flat beneath the one where he was; the next night it was the turn of another one on the same floor. Night after night the search for 'counter-revolutionaries,' actual or potential, went on. It had so happened that his address was not registered in some office or other where the patrols sought their information; he had, I believe, forgotten to hand in a paper to this office—(This was, of course, before anybody dreamed of the Bolshevists or the Terror)—and, thanks to this accident and more

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good luck, he still lives. Less fortunate officers were dragged by the mob to the old naval officers' mess at Sevastopol; there their heads were held on the top of a grand piano and the heavy lid slammed down upon them. This the mob called 'cracking nuts.' Then the Germans came to Sevastopol, and in a few days order was restored. As in the Transcaucasus, these were picked men, with strict orders to behave; they thought, no doubt, that a German victory in the East would be followed by the Germanisation of Russia, and they were anxious to commence by making a good impression. After the German defeats on the Western Front, however, these troops retired, and an Allied squadron arrived.

It will be remembered that some of the French troops in the South of Russia mutinied and refused to obey their officers. The Allied forces retired. The conduct of the French ships and their officers and crews was so amazing that no Allied Government has yet dared to publish an account of it. Theft, rape, and all kinds of villainy were the order of the day. From that memorable occasion the French have become the most hated nation in Russia. Again the Bolshevists came and the horrors recommenced.

I told the officer that I thought he was looking rather ill. Was this the effect of his experiences under the Bolshevists?

'I have the French to thank that I have now got consumption. They appointed me mining officer to an old boat they had put in commission. One day a wave drenched the boat. All our cabins

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were soaked. We applied for fuel to dry our bunks. They refused it. Hence my present condition.

'My God,' he cried suddenly, 'I hope I live long enough to fight the French!'

I told him I was on my way to Denikin's front. His face contracted. 'I fought for Denikin,' he said, 'until I was too ill to fight any longer, but—Well, you must go and see for yourself.'

I have touched upon some of the inconveniences of life in the Transcaucasus. Things were no better at sea. The following incidents are typical of what we used to hear almost daily while I was at Batum.

A steamer was sailing down the coast to Batum, when, suddenly, a party of Georgian passengers, who had concealed their revolvers in loaves of bread, held up the crew and the passengers. A rowing-boat came out from the Georgian coast and took the robbers to land, while the unfortunate rest of the passengers continued their journey penniless. Soon after another boat was held up by a party of brigands in a shore-boat.

A rich Armenian merchant, with a companion, was stepping into his motor-car outside the Palace Hotel, one of the chief hotels in Batum, when a gang of men rushed up, shot him dead, and decamped with the large sum of money that he was taking to the bank.

Nouri Pasha, the brother of Enver Pasha, was sent to Batum from Constantinople in April, 1919, for trial as an instigator of Armenian atrocities during the War. He was handed over for custody

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to the Durhams, and confined by them in some barracks outside the town. Very stringent orders for his safe custody were received from head-quarters at Constantinople (who ought to have looked after him themselves instead of putting the responsibility on the weak force at Batum). In May, 1919, information was received from Baku that a large party, well armed and provided with money, had left there for Batum to secure Nouri's release. Some weeks later his place of confinement was changed to an old house, also outside the town. Ten soldiers of the Durhams and an officer were placed in charge of him. One evening, at the beginning of August, 1919, Nouri was taken for a walk along the Artvin road, in charge of an officer and two armed orderlies. The party was resting at the side of the road, about two miles from the camp, when suddenly the two soldiers were shot dead by a party of ten to twenty men who were ambushed in the long grass. Nouri got up and escaped. The British officer, who was unarmed, made his way with difficulty to the Polo Ground, about a mile away, and gave the alarm to the officers playing there, who called out an Indian battalion near by and went in pursuit of the Turks. But Nouri got clear. It was rumoured that he had passed through Batum in a British motor-car and boarded the train for Baku at a wayside station. Eleven British officers were court-martialled for his escape, and the town of Batum was fined 2,000,000 roubles by the authorities at Constantinople and put under martial law. His captors described Nouri as a

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man about 30-35 years of age, every inch a leader, and a brilliant conversationalist, passionately fond of music and painting. A former Turkish officer, named Alberti, who claimed to have acted as interpreter when General Townshend surrendered at Kut, was arrested for alleged complicity in Nouri's escape, and deported from Batum. He went to England, and soon afterwards returned to Batum as a British subject and agent for a well-known London and Constantinople firm!

At the height of one of the periodical murder epidemics in the town, an old retired Russian General came to the British Chief of Police with a series of threatening letters, which he said he had received. Inquiries were made, with the assistance of the capable secret police agents who remained from the Tsarist régime, and it was discovered that the old gentleman had written the letters himself. He had been piqued at his lost importance, and had adopted this means of reviving it.

At an Armenian wedding that took place in the town, the bride and bridesmaids were swathed in mosquito-netting, the property of the British Army, and everybody wore new boots, the uppers of which were fashioned out of Army nosebags. These boots were standard articles of illicit trade in the town.

A certain Georgian politician arrived at Batum from Paris, where, he said, he had been helping to present Georgia's case to the Peace Conference. After calling on the British Military Governor, he went off to the station to take the train for Tiflis.

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On the platform a Russian officer engaged in the British customs service observed that the Georgian had with him a suspiciously large amount of luggage, and he asked him to open the luggage for inspection, as every passenger was liable to be asked to do, smuggling being rife at this time. The other declared that he was 'a Georgian diplomat,' and refused to show his luggage. When the Russian officer insisted, the Georgian struck him in the face. It is a Russian law, written or unwritten, that an officer is entitled to avenge insults of this nature; and the officer, after chasing the Georgian round the station, shot him, the bullet slightly grazing his chest. The Georgian collapsed, and a British sentry telephoned to the Chief of Police, who at once came down from his mess in a car. (He was used to being called out at short notice on errands of this nature.) He found the Georgian groaning in a waiting-room, surrounded by the Georgian consul, the Georgian Military Attaché, the Georgian Naval Attaché (the Georgian navy at this time consisted of a flag, several sailing-boats, and one or two tugs commandeered from Russian owners, etc.), and other Georgian officials. The Russian officer was sitting quite unmoved on the diplomat's luggage, waiting for the keys to be handed to him. The Chief of Police scented trouble and went off at once to the Military Governor, who was taking an after-dinner nap.

'What's the matter now?' asked the Governor, drowsily, from behind his mosquito-curtain.

'Man wounded at the station, sir,' reported the Chief of Police.

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'That's nothing new,' said the General. 'Who is it to-day?'

'He says he's a Georgian diplomat, sir; and the Georgian Consul's there with him.'

'Not the man who called on me this morning!'

'The very same, sir.'

'My God,' cried the Governor, getting off his bed, 'this place will be the death of me! Who was it shot him?'

'A Russian officer in the customs service, sir. He says he asked the man to let him examine his luggage, and he struck him in the face; by Russian law, he says, he is entitled to shoot him.'

'Put him under arrest! Take the Georgian off to the British hospital!'

The Chief of Police went off to the station with an ambulance and had the Georgian put inside it. Half-way to the hospital, the victim suddenly announced that if any Russians were employed in the hospital, no matter in what capacity, he refused to go there.

'You'll go where you're sent!' said the Chief of Police.

The wound was very slight and the provocation extreme; but the Russian officer, much to his astonishment, was given six months' imprisonment for the offence. He did not serve out his full term, however, as the Batum prisons were not large enough to hold a tenth of the candidates for places in them, and his cell was badly wanted for some of the innumerable blackguards who were turning Batum into a nest of crime. The Georgian authorities at Tiflis and Kutaïs made a practice of

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unloading their criminals and prostitutes upon Batum, both in order to make their own towns quieter and to embarrass the British.

A picnic party was sitting at the side of the Batum-Artvin road, a few miles out of the town, when a shot rang out, and a girl among the picnickers fell dead. The Turkish deserter who fired the shot, nobody knows with what intent, took to the hills and was never caught. This was one of the rare occasions when the criminal was not a Georgian. Ninety per cent. of the offences in Batum during the British occupation were committed by Georgians, whose lawless behaviour had been with difficulty checked by the experienced Russians in the old days.

As a deterrent to crime in the Batum Province, the British authorities had to resort to public executions. This seemed a brutal measure, but it was justified by results. Three times a little party of men were led out of the prison and shot before the public gaze—so far, at any rate, as the town was forewarned of the intended execution. The punishment worked like a charm upon the lawless Georgian elements in the town, and crime lessened considerably for several weeks after each execution.

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CHAPTER II

A JOURNEY THROUGH GEORGIA

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INDIVIDUALLY, the Georgians are charming people. They are famous in the East for wine, women, and song. There is no better company than a dinner-party of Georgians, no matter of what class, especially when the wine has gone round a few times. The men are handsome, reckless, and a little inclined to be boastful. They wear the most outrageously fierce clothes, and look very bellicose; but a joke softens them instantly into high good-humour. They are natural poets. But the qualities that make the Georgian a delightful companion do not necessarily fit him for statesmanship and citizenship.[1] Be this as it may, I am sorry to say that the record of the Georgian Government, in its two years' existence in the Transcaucasus, has been marred by nearly every fault that a State can commit. Chauvinism has run riot. And it has gone hand in hand with a vindictive persecution of the Russians in Georgia, by way of emphasising the highly disputable

[1] I do not wish, by anything in this book, to offend any Georgian in his national pride; I have too many Georgian friends to desire this to happen. But all peoples have their weaknesses, and when they allow their politicians to play on these, the failings often deserve a harsher name. I do not necessarily accuse all their politicians of deliberately doing this; they act according to their lights, no doubt, but one man's lights are often everybody else's darkness.

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asseveration of Georgian ultra-patriots that Georgia was persecuted by the Russians in pre-Revolutionary days.

When I reached the Transcaucasus a wild propaganda was being conducted from Tiflis for the cession of Batum to Georgia. The claim was based chiefly on three grounds: (1) that Batum was historically and culturally a part of Georgia; (2) that the inhabitants of Batum were eager to be united to Georgia; and (3) that the possession of Batum was vital to the existence of Georgia. Now, in my opinion, and in that of nearly everybody in Batum who could claim any acquaintance with the facts, none of these claims was justified. In the first place, Batum had never been of the slightest importance until the Russians took it from Turkey forty years ago, so that it is difficult to see how it could be, as the Georgian newspapers averred, the 'cultural centre' of Georgia. The second claim, that the inhabitants of the Batum Province were anxious to be joined to Georgia, was based largely upon messages that appeared in the Tiflis papers over the signatures of two men, Mehmed Bek Abashidze and Djemal Pasha Adjarsky. Both these men were in the pay of the Georgian Government, and Mehmed Bek had established a so-called 'Georgian Mohammedan Council,' which he ran with funds provided by Tiflis. Mehmed Bek was a fat, swaggering creature, with fierce moustaches, who swaggered round the town in a flowing Circassian robe. His record was so bad that the Russians had deported him from Batum in the old days, and the Turks

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had done the same when they occupied the Province in 1918. Informers used to give details of the meetings of the 'Georgian Mohammedan Council,' at which Mehmed Bek would be accused by his fellow-committee members of embezzling the funds from Tiflis, a charge which he and his brother, who was of the same water as himself, used to retort upon the others. And, indeed, towards the spring of 1920 Tiflis became suspicious and began to send less money. However, the Tiflis papers published all Mehmed Bek's telegrams, which assured the people of Tiflis that their 'blood-brothers' of Batum were yearning to be 're-united' to Georgia. This was, perhaps, true of some of the Georgian Christians in Batum; but it was certainly false of the Adjarians, the so-called 'Georgian Mohammedans,' who, as later events were to show, were passionately hostile to the pretensions of Tiflis. In a word, Mehmed Bek and Djemal Pasha were saying the thing that was not.

To the third claim, that the possession of Batum was vital to the existence of Georgia, one had to reply that it was still more necessary that Azerbaijan, and, above all, Armenia, should be left with an open port at Batum. The Georgians had many other ports on the Black Sea, of which Poti was the best. If none of these was as good a port as Batum, there was nothing to stop the Georgians from developing Poti, which had excellent railway communications, and meanwhile using Batum on the same terms as the other Transcaucasian States. But to hand over the port to the Georgians, in the hope that they would not interfere with their

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neighbours' use of it, was a suggestion that raised only a smile from observers and a protest from the other States. The Georgian Government was deliberately, and almost without concealment, endeavouring to secure the hegemony of the Transcaucasus by occupying all its ports.

The railway line between Batum and Tiflis was, rather unwisely, handed over (by order of Constantinople or England) to Georgia in March, 1919, by the British authorities. Even in the Batum Province the Georgians had been given the running rights, in return for a monthly rental, so that the control of the line was wholly in their hands. Their first act, of course, was to discharge most of the old Russian employees and substitute Georgians for them. The service, especially in the Batum Province, failed to satisfy the needs, comfort, or even the personal safety of the passengers. Train robberies were frequent within the Georgian frontier, and in our own near the Georgian border. It was suspected that some of the outrages in the Province were condoned, if not encouraged, by the Georgian authorities, because they could be used as arguments for the cession of Batum to Georgia, 'since the British are unable to keep order.' Such is the level of the behaviour of small democratic Governments.

At the end of November I went up to Tiflis. The train on which I travelled was, fortunately, not attacked, and we covered the 217 miles to Tiflis overnight in a little over the customary 12 to 14 hours. At the Georgian frontier, Georgian officials went through everybody's luggage. They

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were extraordinarily unpleasant; nothing would satisfy them but to go through every stitch of your linen. If they saw an English officer travelling, they took a special delight in examining his luggage with even closer attention than other people's; this was one way of showing us that they were an independent nation. It is a childish trait, but the Georgians, as an independent State, have been nothing if not childish. Had I not the evidence of my own senses, I could not have believed that this people could be so spoiled by a few months of 'independence'; every day I saw them yielding more and more to the shrieking propaganda of the Tiflis Chauvinists, until at last, to the extent of their opportunities, they were much more Prussian than the Prussians. They were drunk, absolutely drunk, with the new wine of freedom; all they seemed to think about was how to take advantage of their new international position, or rather of what they conceived to be their position. That their new status had brought duties and responsibilities with it was the last thing that entered their heads; the propagandists who had babbled to them of selfish 'foreign imperialism' had done their work too well. They aped what they imagined to be the characteristic features of the Great Powers, with the result that they soon had all the airs and none of the graces of their models.

When, at last, the insolent customs officers and their boyish soldier guards had finished their search, I went through to the refreshment car. This had a long table down the centre, at which a typically assorted Caucasian company was sitting.

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There were Georgian students, talking Russian very loudly—despite the official revival of the Georgian language. I noticed everywhere in Georgia that Russian was still considered *chic*—Armenian merchants; Georgian officers, very fierce and untidy; and a few Russians, Frenchmen, and Jews. A strange, red-faced individual took a seat next to me, put a greasy fur hat right in front of me, and went to sleep. I pushed the dirty hat away, and the overworked waitress hung it up. She took no more notice of him for half an hour, when he suddenly woke up and demanded dinner. I then discovered that he had a nasty cold in his head, but did not understand the use of a handkerchief; and soon, when his dinner was brought, I observed, to my discomfort, that the use of a fork was also strange to him. However, when he came to pay, he pulled out a huge wad of notes, looking round at me with cunning little eyes that glittered under his dirty hair. His whole manner and manners suggested the Caucasian secret agent, Georgian or Bolshevist, of the type that is sent about these parts to stir up trouble. Except for the Frenchmen, the atmosphere of the dining-car, with its Babu students and rough and unready officers, was so Asiatic that I felt as if I was back again in a Native State in India. Especially did the Georgians remind me of the Kashmiris, both in character and in looks.

I saw a funny scene in the morning. As the train stopped in a station, one of the Frenchmen jumped out, towel in hand, to get a wash. Alas! it was one of the first acts of Georgian independence

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to whitewash over all the Russian signs and nameplates on the railways, and to substitute Georgian notices for them. The same service could have been accomplished by supplementing the Russian with Georgian, but it is typical that this was considered insufficient for Georgian independence. Consequently, the Frenchman, who spoke Russian well, was unable to find his way to the lavatories. When, at last, a Georgian passenger pointed them out to him, he was still unable to decipher which were men's and which were women's, and he had the mortification of seeing the train commence to move before he had time to wash, and he returned cursing what seemed to him patriotism carried too far.

Tiflis had not changed much since Russian times. Indeed, it was obvious that the town was running on what was left of the old Russian machinery—and slowly running down. I succeeded in obtaining accommodation in a distant part of the town. Setting out for breakfast, I came up against the 'food crisis'; the bread I ate cost as much as the staple Georgian dish, turkey, while the butter cost more than either. Another 'crisis' occurred at the hotel when I asked for a bath—there was no water, hot or cold. In the evening, too, the electric light burned at quarter strength, owing, I understood, to the 'labour crisis.'

I do not wish to suggest that everything was as bad at Tiflis, or that this was worse than elsewhere. On the contrary, there was much that recalled the old Russian days. Not in vain had Russia for so

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long poured millions of roubles annually into Georgia. But, now that Georgia was free and independent, she was undergoing many more crises than were good for her.

A 'Social-Democratic' Government was in power, all the members of which, so one of them told me, were journalists, with one exception, a lawyer. The Social-Democratic Party—Menshevist fraction —had 105 seats out of 130 in the Georgian Parliament. Theirs was in many ways a curious Social-Democracy. The Red Flag flew over all Government buildings and official motor-cars; and gentlemen who in other countries would be suspected of ultra-bourgeois leanings, proudly called themselves convinced and lifelong Socialists. The Bolshevist fraction of the Social-Democratic party had been declared illegal. I asked one of the Georgian Ministers why his Government called itself 'Social-Democratic.' He replied, with a shrug of the shoulders, 'One must call oneself something.'

After a few private calls, I went to the British Commission, and saw Mr Wardrop, our High Commissioner, whom I had met once or twice in London. He was very amiable, and told me how, in his opinion, matters stood in the Transcaucasus. I was not much surprised to find that he took an extremely pro-Georgian view of affairs. He and his late sister have done more to make Georgia and Georgian literature known in England than any one else. Both in Batum and Armenia I found people who were scandalised that a gentleman of such pronounced views should be appointed

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to a position which called for considerable intellectual disinterestedness, since the Georgians were only one of the rival elements in the Transcaucasus. I felt safe in answering that Mr Wardrop would certainly never consciously allow himself to be biased by Georgian propaganda; it was not for some months, however, that he appeared to discover how grossly the Georgian Government was disappointing his hopes for it.

From him I went on to Mr Gegechkori, the Foreign Minister. He is a lawyer to his finger-tips, and has obviously been trained in the Russian school. It was suggested that the separatist doctrines he had to preach were distasteful to his instincts and his sense of proportion. However, if this was so, he had certainly no intention of publishing his private thoughts to me, since he insisted that I should take down his remarks *verbatim*, which were to the following effect.

He declared that the chief aim of his policy at the moment—(This was before the Allies recognised the *de facto* independence of Georgia)—was to secure the recognition of Georgia's independence by the Great Powers. He based his claims to this on three grounds: principle, history, and the people's welfare. The principle of the right of small nations to independence was, he held, established by the result of the War. Secondly, he said, Georgia's historical claims to independence were beyond dispute, since Georgia had, in 1803, voluntarily joined itself to the Russian Empire, and could, therefore, reassert its independence if it so wished. The third principle, that of the welfare

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of the Georgian people, could be served under present circumstances only by their dissolving the union with Russia and becoming an independent nation. The aim of Georgia in joining itself to Russia had been to come into direct contact with European culture and civilisation through the medium of Russia. But, now that Russia was no longer able to give Georgia this contact with Europe, Georgia was bound to strike out for itself.

'We have always been on the threshold of Europe,' he said, 'and now we want to be Europeans.'

It may not be out of place to remark here that this explanation of the Georgian junction with Russia, as an attempt to bridge the gulf with Europe, is a romantic hypothesis for which it would be difficult to find historical evidence. The ancient independence of Georgia also lies in the sphere rather of relativity than of fact; between Persia, Byzantium, the Tartars, and, later, Russia, Georgia was always rather a pawn than an independent ally. Its anarchy, or, at best, its talent for promiscuous submission, was the measure of its mediæval 'independence.' In 1803, when the 'voluntary union' with Russia took place, it was not a State at all, but an arena of quarrelling tribes.[1] As for the plea of the 'rights of small

[1] 'It has long become a habit, almost a fashion, to speak of the persecution of Caucasian nationalities by the Russian autocracy. Only few people, however, realise that the very development of national consciousness became possible solely owing to the fact of the unification of Transcaucasia under the Russian sway. Georgia, which now claims a particularly strong feeling of national unity, has worked it out exclusively owing to the state of things created by Russia. Before Russia came, there existed

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nations,' certain peculiarities about the Georgian Government's attitude towards the position of non-Georgian minorities in the country seemed to me to make the claim a little one-sided.

M. Gegechkori continued: 'Can we really exist as an independent and civilised nation? In my opinion, the fact that we have kept going during the last year and a half, in spite of the conditions caused by the war and by Bolshevism in Russia, is a test that proves the justice of our claim. At

only separate Georgian tribes quarrelling with each other. Within Georgia itself (which voluntarily federated with Russia in 1783 and was afterwards annexed according to the desire formally expressed by its King in 1802) two national centres fought for predominance, one in Kakhetia, another in Kartalinia. The remaining kindred tribes were united to Russia each by a separate treaty of the dynasty—Mingrelia in 1803, Imerethia in 1804, Guria and Abkhazia in 1810, Svanethia in 1833. Long after this reunion, which took place after full five centuries of separation, tribal separatisms were still alive. It was not before the last quarter of the nineteenth century that a single and united national idea was worked out by Georgian patriots, and the newly reborn Georgian literary language was definitely acknowledged as a symbol of national unity.'—P. N. Milyukov.

'The ancient Iberian monarchy, broken up by the testamentary dispositions of the Emperor Alexander I. of Georgia four hundred years previously, was at last re-united under the sceptre of Alexander I. of Russia.'—Baddeley's *Russian Conquest of the Caucasus*, p. 66.

There has, of course, been a Georgian nationalist movement for some decades now, but the separatist appeal was not strong. It is well known that at the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in March, 1917, the Georgians did not claim separate independence. Two of the most prominent leaders of the Russian Revolution were the Georgians Ch'heidse and Tseretelli. It was only after the Bolshevists deposed these Menshevists from their prominent positions in the Soviets that they took up the cause of an independent Georgia, on behalf of which they attended the Paris Peace Conference. Both Bolshevists and anti-Bolshevists have criticised this change of front.

As late as December 3, 1917, M Jordania (now President of Georgia) said: 'As a part of Russia we keep standing on an all-Russian platform.' The separatist movement is new and frail.

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the present moment, it is true, we are faced with a financial crisis and a food crisis; but if any Western nation would help us to get rid of these two things, our State mechanism would work satisfactorily.'

The reader may be reminded that Georgia survived the two years to which M. Gegechkori referred partly by its ready diplomacy, which was now, however, reaching the end of the cycle away from Russia and back to the Bolshevists, and not less through the efforts of the various European influences in the Transcaucasus, enemy and Ally, which had restrained the various peoples of the Transcaucasus from jumping at each others' throats. But for German intervention, the Turks long before would have overrun Georgia. But for Denikin and the other anti-Bolshevist leaders in the north, the Bolshevist armies could have swept through Georgia whenever they wished. But for British intervention, the Armenian troops, man for man the best and bravest forces in the Transcaucasus, would, perhaps, have occupied Tiflis in the recent Georgian-Armenian squabble. The Georgians are not a serious fighting force.

It was regrettable, added M Gegechkori, that there was, apparently, great distrust of the Georgian Government at Batum, since the possession of the port of Batum was essential to the future welfare of Georgia and its two million and a half inhabitants.[1]

[1] The Georgian Government is curiously erratic in its computation of the numbers of Georgians and the population of Georgia. The last genuine statistics (published by the Russians in 1917) give 1½ million Georgian Christians, and 139,000 Georgian Mohammedans.

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No one who has the interests of Georgia really at heart, he said, would suggest that its fate ought ever again to be joined to that of Russia. 'Why should we unite with Russia again, in a federation or any other machinery? We joined ourselves to Russia a hundred years ago,' he repeated, 'because we imagined that Russia would be a source of the European civilisation and culture that we desired; now that Russia is out of the world, we are seeking other channels for an uninterrupted junction with Europe.'

I felt that there was much more rhetoric than reason in most of his remarks. The fact, also, that the distrust of the Georgian Government's intentions was stronger at Batum, which was near, than at Paris or London, which were far, was hardly a good advertisement of its popularity. M. Gegechkori had admitted that Georgia could not stand alone financially or economically;[1] and he practically admitted that this was true in the political and military spheres also. For, he said, England would have to maintain by her authority whatever settlement was arrived at for the

M. Ghambashidze, a well-known Georgian propagandist diplomat, gave the population of Georgia in 1919 (*The Mineral Resources of Georgia*, p. 6) as four millions. M Gegechkori told me in December, 1919, that the population was 2½ millions. Mr Ramsay Macdonald, who was in Georgia for a short while in the autumn of 1920, announced ingenuously (in the *Nation*, October 16, 1920), that 'Georgia is a small nation with rich traditions. It has 4,000,000 people, and a fine public spirit.' The whole of Mr Macdonald's article is a farrago of unchecked Georgian propagandist assertions, many of them patently absurd.

[1] Georgia has always been dependent upon supplies of food from the South Russian steppes. She cannot feed herself. Her resources, mineral and otherwise, are insufficient to balance her needs in the way of food and other imports.

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Transcaucasus. Against this, however, he claimed that friendly arrangements had been made with the Azerbaijan and Armenian Governments, and, thanks to Georgian mediation, between the Azerbaijanis and the Armenians. He claimed, therefore, that there was no danger of the Transcaucasus becoming a second Balkans.

What he did not tell me, but what was evident enough to any one who knew a little of the inside of the Transcaucasian situation, was that Georgia could not count upon Azerbaijan support in the event of a Turkish or pro-Turkish invasion of the Caucasus. Nor, as time was to show, was the Tartar-Armenian Treaty worth the paper it was written on.

From M. Gegechkori, the Foreign Minister, I went to call upon M. Ramashvili, who combined at that time the posts of War Minister, Minister of the Interior, and Minister of Education. I found him at the War Ministry, together with his Chief of Staff. I do not remember the latter's name, but, in contrast with his chief, he was a typically pleasant Georgian, jolly and frank, altogether a good fellow. M. Ramashvili, however, was a cunning-looking man, with pronounced Oriental features. I noticed with interest that his trousers hung in Eastern rolls upon his thin legs. M. Gegechkori was a different type from both of these; he was 'Europe-returned,' as the Indians say. I much preferred the Chief of Staff (who at intervals interjected cynical remarks that were always illuminating and sometimes downright undiplomatic) to both the Ministers.

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M. Ramashvili at once offered me an explanation of the risings which had disturbed the country a week or two before. They were, he said, entirely due to Bolshevist propaganda from Moscow. The Bolshevists, after their defeats at Kursk and Orel, wanted to establish a new front in Denikin's rear, and decided to attempt to capture Georgia for the Bolshevist cause. Eighty-seven million roubles had been brought from Moscow for the purpose of propaganda, chiefly in Nicholas and Kerensky notes. For this reason Kerensky notes of certain amounts were now not legal tender in Georgia. An outbreak had been arranged for October 4th, but the Government had got wind of it and had prevented it. As for the outbreak that had actually taken place, it had been manned almost entirely by criminals and deserters, led by Russian and Chinese Bolshevists; the peasants took no part in the rising whatever. The trouble had now been satisfactorily liquidated; the Constituent Assembly had permitted the institution of courts-martial, and some thirty of the leaders of the rising had already been shot. Altogether during the past year several hundred Bolshevists and their supporters had been executed;[1] and there was no longer any possibility of a renewed outbreak.

[1] M. Ramashvili doubtless thought that this would go down well with English papers. Curiously enough, Mr Ramsay Macdonald, passing through Georgia about ten months later, has stated (of course, on information received from the Georgian Government) that no 'reprisals' have been resorted to against the Bolshevists. 'The Georgian Government,' he added, 'remained firm, playing the long suit of liberty. It won.' (*Nation*, October 16, 1920.) Lists of 'Bolshevists' executed—there were no Chinamen among them—appeared in the Tiflis papers in November, 1919.

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I had good reason, however, to suppose that these statements were in many respects inaccurate. In the first place, a member of the Georgian Government, passing through Batum, had informed the British there that, far from the peasants having taken no part in the risings, these were much more of the nature of popular demonstrations against the Government than pro-Bolshevist movements; conscription was unpopular, and the peasants also complained that the large estates ought to have been distributed freely among them, instead of their being forced to purchase them. Besides, I thought, why should the Bolshevists worry about creating 'a new front in Denikin's rear' when the Georgian Government was itself working against Denikin in every possible way?

M. Ramashvili went on to give me details of the land reform. All big estates had been confiscated; about 25 acres were left to the owner, and the rest was split up and sold to the peasants at an average of about 1,000 roubles an acre, the money going to the State funds. The land was sold to the peasants as their own property. The reform was to be completed in two years. Georgia was not an industrial country, he said, and therefore there was no need for a drastic industrial programme of Social-Democracy! There was, he added, a heavy deficit in the finances of the State.

I suggested that the recent decree expelling non-Georgians not engaged in trade or occupying Government positions was likely to cause great

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suffering and to make a bad impression abroad, especially when taken in conjunction with the Government's undisguised anti-Russian policy. M. Ramashvili replied that the decree was necessitated by the food crisis, which was due to the bad harvest and the mobilisation of the Army.

'We have a lot of useless people here,' he said. 'First there are Russian ex-officers and their families. These people support the Bolshevists, even though they are in sym[illegible]y with Denikin [!] Then there are the families of officers who are away fighting in the Volunteer Army; we have to feed these families.'

M. Ramashvili assured me, but without going into his reasons, that, if Georgia did not secure the Province and port of Batum, the country would not be able to hold out. He then gave me details of his schemes for village *Turnvereine*, etc., all of which seemed to me to bear out my first impression of him, when he asked me if I would like to talk to him in German. M. Ramashvili is a known admirer of German methods, and, as the spokesman of the Georgian chauvinists in the Ministry, he had done a great deal to bring that Prussianism into Georgian official methods which everybody found so unpleasing. His personal rivalry with M. Gegechkori was one of the motive forces of Georgian politics. It was supposed at that time that M. Gegechkori, despite his public utterances, stood for moderation and a *rapprochement* with Russia at the first favourable opportunity, and that

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M. Ramashvili opposed these moderate impulses.[1]

But, in fact, the Ministry stood for little in Georgia. As in all the other Caucasian republics—free, independent, democratic, socialist, and so on—the real power rested with the best-organised armed group. There was a strange phenomenon in Georgia known as the 'People's Guard,' a well-equipped, numerous and mightily privileged militia. Its members, most of them ex-soldiers of the Russian army, were workmen, or rather ex-workmen, who were not only well paid by their leaders but were entitled also to receive their wages from their employers, although they no longer worked for them. There was much antagonism between this force and the new Georgian army, the officers and men of the latter being considerably worse paid and equipped. Moreover, the army, being composed of unwilling conscript peasants, suffered from desertions.[2] The 'People's Guard' was not even under the War Minister's control, but was

[1] I am told that the position was reversed in the course of 1920. M. Ramashvili then became the mainstay of the moderate parties, while M. Gegechkori went over to the extremists. All this, of course, behind the scenes. This would help to explain the virtual expulsion of M. Gegechkori from Georgia in the autumn of 1920, on the thin excuse of a 'special mission to Europe.' I defy any one, however, to fathom the motives of Georgian politicians.

[2] M. Ramashvili gave me some information about the Georgian army. Conscription has been introduced, service being compulsory at the age of 21 for a period of 16 months with the infantry and cavalry and of 20 months with the artillery and engineers. The Minister told me that the peace-time strength of the Georgian army was 16,000, and claimed that from 150,000 to 200,000 trained men could be put in the field if necessary. He would not give me any information about the armament and equipment of the army, assuring me that this was kept a secret from even the other members of the Government.

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its own master. It was said to consist of 20,000 men, and was by far the strongest force in Georgia. It was armed with the pick of the materials left behind by the Russians in their evacuation of Tiflis in 1917, the Germans in 1918 and the British in 1919. The leader of this force was a certain Jugeli, once a student at Moscow University, a man of vain and fiery mind. Having won renown in Georgia during the last year or two by his campaigns in Armenia, and at Sochi against the Denikin Volunteers—or rather by the soul-inspiring accounts of his prowess in the Tiflis papers—he was now anxious to add the conquest of Batum to his laurels. It was he who was chiefly responsible for the Georgian demands for Batum. For, while the Georgian Government was *publicly* moving heaven and earth to obtain Batum for Georgia, *in private* they could only be intensely relieved that European troops were being left there and that the responsibility of its administration and protection against Turkish and Bolshevist aggression was not being given to them. They knew that they could not hold the country against a real attack by the Turks or Bolshevists, and, moreover they feared that Jugeli and his 'People's Guard' were likely to be a menace to the Government as soon as a favourable opportunity for a *coup de force* presented itself. Consequently, while the Ministry was forced to go some distance to meet the demands of the chauvinists, in order not to provoke Jugeli, it was trying at the same time to prevent the full chauvinist programme being carried out, for fear this should give Jugeli

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too much direct power. The ramifications of Georgian diplomacy, therefore, became extensive. Advances, checks, counter-checks and counter-advances—there was such a muddle of propaganda and intrigue that soon nobody could know what the Georgian Government wanted and what it did not. The Ministry would deliver a series of addresses in the Chamber demanding the cession of Batum and swearing roundly to snatch it from the brutal British invader by force of arms; and at the same time some responsible person or other would be confidentially begging the British authorities to withdraw their threat of evacuating Batum, because a Turkish force was known to be mobilising on the border and Georgia could not guarantee to preserve order if once we went away! It is possible that all parties in Georgia might have been agreeable to a compromise by the terms of which British troops should temporarily remain in Batum to maintain order in it as a Georgian province under Georgian control. This was a typically Georgian proposal, because while it would have suited Georgia's convenience, it ignored the interests of our own troops, of Armenia, of Azerbaijan, and of all the other people to whom an open port at Batum was necessary.

I discovered from a high Georgian authority at Tiflis that the Georgian Government then intended, should Batum come into their hands, to use their customary anti-Russian methods there. All non-Georgians engaged in the public services were to be given fourteen days to quit. Georgian was to be made the only language for official use, and was

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to be substituted for Russian everywhere. All non-Georgians engaged in trade or owning land—even under the 25-acre limit—would be subjected to such organised persecution that they would soon think themselves fortunate to escape with their lives from Batum. 'Of course, this would not apply to English,' M. Ramashvili said to me in a reassuring tone.

I went into the Georgian Parliament—'We call it the Committee of the Social-Democrat Party,' M. Ramashvili's delightful Chief of Staff had remarked—but as the proceedings were long-winded and entirely in Georgian, I did not stay long. A pleasing commentary on the language question was provided by a newspaper-seller outside, from whom I bought copies of the Russian papers (all semi-official) published in Tiflis; I asked him which he sold more of, the papers printed in Georgian or in Russian. 'Oh, the Russian, by a long way,' he replied. Which bore out my previous observation that most people who can speak Russian prefer to do so in Tiflis to using their ancient but less convenient language. Many Georgians, of course, have lived all their lives in Russia and cannot speak Georgian.

The atmosphere of chauvinism and aggression was sickening to those who had known the Georgians in quieter times and still liked them for what was truly national and excellent in them. How much better would it have been, I felt, if, instead of this crude and raucous imperialism, their new independence had followed the note in

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the charming lines by their poet of the last generation, Prince Elia Chavchavadze:

> Once more the swallow sings and soars;
> The forest dons its leafy dress;
> The rosebush in the garden pours
> Tears for very happiness.
>
> And all around the mountains bloom,
> And flowers blossom on the fen,
> But O, my old ancestral home,
> Wilt thou, too, blossom soon again?

What a far cry from this nationalism to modern Tiflis politics!

But in some characteristics at least Georgia was not much changed from of old. I noticed in Tiflis that about one man in two had a bandage round his head or a patch over his eye. Tiflis had always been a lively place. Returning one evening from the opera with an English acquaintance, I heard a tremendous row issuing from our hotel. We made our way to the restaurant, whence the noise came, and discovered fifty to sixty Georgian men of all classes, ages, and appearance, sitting round a long table that was covered with plates and bottles. At the end of the room a space had been cleared, and there was an orchestra, consisting of a tomtom, a flute, and another wind instrument, to the shrill notes of which three of the diners were dancing Georgian dances. At the slightest provocation the Georgian loves to dance, whirling round in a great circle and keeping time to his friends' handclaps. On this occasion the

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excitement and noise were overpowering. We were noticed; and, my friend being in uniform, the orchestra was silenced and the piano played the inevitable 'Tipperary,' which does duty in these parts as the British National Anthem, followed by its usual accompaniment, 'Whom were you with last night?' (I suspect that a copy of 'Tipperary' reached Tiflis with the other song, which also was popular at the outbreak of the War, printed on the back. Ever since, the two have been indivisible in the Transcaucasus.) We were then offered glass after glass of wine, and informed that the occasion was not an ordinary gathering, but a dinner to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Georgian Winegrowers' Co-operative Association. At this we prepared for the worst. We crept up to our rooms an hour later, leaving the drinking, the music, and the dancing at their highest pitch. But they were all gone in the morning—young, old, and middle-aged, peasants and princes, Georgians all. The next evening I saw the Assistant Public Prosecutor to the Georgian Government step upon the stage in the chief café of the town and sing a succession of excellent comic songs. This, I felt with relief, was more like the true Georgia.

With the gradual ruin of life in Russia during the last years, Tiflis, which had been almost outside the danger zone, had become a centre for what was left of Russian society. One found the strangest people there. Poets and painters from Petrograd and Moscow, philosophers, theosophists,

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dancers, singers, actors and actresses. Paul Yashvili, the leader of the younger Georgian poets, was once moved, after a hearty meal, to climb on a chair in the Café International, in the chief boulevard of Tiflis,[1] and declare, in a loud voice, that 'Not Paris, but Tiflis, is the centre of the world's culture.' Yashvili, an excellent fellow, was, after midnight, the king of Tiflis. You would find him in the underground cabaret, the 'Chimerion,' a huge hall decorated by the modernist painter from Petrograd, Sergei Sudeikin. The cabaret belonged, I believe, to the Tiflis Poets' Guild, of whom Yashvili was the chief; and Sudeikin had worked their portraits into various parts of his mural decoration. The cabaret was not bad; indeed, for this part of the world, very good. There were gipsy songs, of which the Russians are fond; American Negro rag-time singers—Heaven only knows how they got there! —dancers (like the charming 'Lydia Johnson,' who sent all Tiflis mad for a month); impromptu verse-makers, who composed couplets about the people in the room, not always kindly; and short satirical plays. The show would finish at about four in the morning. During the day you went to numbers of new cafés, owned by private individuals or associations of ex-officers or waiters' unions. Here one could meet the most interesting people. One afternoon I sat at a table with Yashvili, two or three other Georgian poets (among

[1] The name of this street, the famous 'Golovinsky Prospect,' was now altered to the 'Rustaveli Prospect.' (Rustaveli is the Georgian classical poet.) The names of many other streets also were Georgianised, to the confusion of the inhabitants.

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them, Robakidze), painters and sculptors; Sudeikin, Sorin (another well-known Russian painter); a certain Sokolov, who had taken a prominent part in Kerensky's Government in 1917; and a curious individual named Georgiy Ivanovich Gourjiev.

The last was a Russian subject of Greek origin. He claims to have spent much of his life in Thibet, Chitral, and India, and generally in Eastern monasteries, where he studied the ancient wisdom of the Orient. He had had a circle in Moscow in the old days, and many members of it had followed him to the Caucasus in 1917 and had wandered about with him ever since. He was still surrounded by this strange entourage of philosophers, doctors, poets, and dancers. He was not exploiting them; on the contrary, several of them were living on his diminishing means. And by them all he was esteemed, almost worshipped, as a guide to the eternal mysteries of the universe. His admirers were by no means fools; some of them were distinguished men, and these especially insisted that Georgiy Ivanovich, as they called him in Russian fashion, had taught them more about their particular art than they had ever learned before. He had peculiar notions about music; others about the ballet; more still about medicine and philosophy; all of which, he said, were based upon secret mathematical mysteries in which he had been instructed in the remote hills of Central Asia! He was a man of striking appearance. Short, dark, and swarthy, with penetrating and clever eyes; no one could be in

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his company for many minutes without being impressed by the force of his personality. One did not need to believe him to be infallible, but there was no denying his extraordinary all-round intelligence. I brought introductions to him, and, fortunately, instead of talking theosophy to me, as I had feared, he was good-natured enough to show me some sides of Tiflis that not all visitors see. First of all, we went to many obscure restaurants, Georgian and Persian, where we ate appetising food in sometimes unappetising surroundings. One of these, however, became my favourite restaurant. It was a cellar—the Georgians love underground rooms for eating—through the windows of which one looked out upon the swift and muddy waters of the Kura River. Georgiy Ivanovich spoke Georgian or Persian to the waiters, which procured us unaccustomed and piquant dishes, and discoursed reminiscences to me in his curiously broken Russian. Russia is a great country for professional mystics, and Georgiy Ivanovich seemed to have been in the most varied circles there. His enemies called him a 'Rasputin *manqué*,' though they had no authority for the evil insinuations that this title suggested. One day we went to the famous hot baths of Tiflis, from which in ancient days the town took its name. A tall, bearded Persian led us into a bare chamber of stone, where two jets of sulphurous water poured into great basins in the floor. The water was of blood-heat, and for some time we sat at our ease in the pits. Then the Persian returned with a kind of pillow case of thin linen, and, taking the

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soap which we had bought before entering the baths, he dropped it in the bag, filled the latter with air, and squeezed it out until all the air had disappeared in a vast lather. With the suds he washed and scraped me, and then, throwing many basins of the hot water over me, he put me back in the pit while he attended to my companion. Afterwards he pulled me out again and massaged me in an unaccustomed manner, until I felt several inches taller, much leaner, and very tired indeed. Then we dressed, paid some small sum for the use of the baths, and passed out where the washer-women of Tiflis wash their clothes in the overflow of the natural warm springs of the mountain-side. We went to a Persian restaurant near by, and afterwards went home to sleep off the effects of the bath.

In the evenings, I used to call at Georgiy Ivanovich's 'Institute for Harmonic Human Development' and watch him rehearsing a ballet which he had himself invented, composed, and set to music. The story was a Manichaean theme —the strife of white and black magicians. The dances, he declared, were based on movements and gestures which had been handed down by tradition and paintings in Thibetan monasteries where he had been. The music, also, was of mysterious tradition. He himself could not play a note, and knew nothing of composition; but the academician who interpreted his ideas assured me that he had learned more of the theory of music from Georgiy Ivanovich than in any of the schools. The decorations and costumes were also the work of Georgiy

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Ivanovich; he had even painted and sewn them himself. I do not know if the ballet has yet been presented; there was talk of the Tiflis Opera House being lent for it; but, when I was last in Tiflis, Georgiy Ivanovich had become a little weary of his pupils and was looking forward to a journey without them to Europe or to Egypt and the East.[1] In any other man I should have been sceptical of most of his tales; but certainly Georgiy Ivanovich was out of the common theosophical ruck. If he really wanted to go anywhere, were it even to his mysterious monasteries in Thibet—in one of which, he said, echoing an Indian tradition, Jesus had studied!—I cannot see who would be able to prevent his going. He certainly knew Russia and the Transcaucasus excellently. He knew of strange ancient temples and pagan holy places there, which made me look forward to the journey we proposed to make to them when peaceful conditions returned to the land. In his interesting company my time passed quickly in Tiflis.

Another friend of mine in Tiflis had a large carpet store, where he collected thousands of carpets every year for despatch to London, Paris, and New York and other capitals. I was fortunate enough to call on him, at a moment when he was about to despatch a huge consignment through Batum to Europe. It was a fine experience to see these hundreds of rugs, all peasant-made and all different in design and execution. Never before

[1] He reached Constantinople late in 1920, and I hear that he now proposes to produce his ballet in Paris.

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had I realised what a great art is that of the carpet. I spent morning after morning in the cool halls of his store, smoking innumerable cigarettes to try to keep my throat fairly clear of the dust that rose up in clouds from the piles of many-coloured carpets. Skilful Armenian porters, tall, fine-featured men, packed the carpets into bales as neatly as if they were parcels of handkerchiefs.

Then, out in the street, swarms of miserable Armenian orphan beggars, tiny creatures in rags, would run after me and get between my legs, with shrill cries of 'Uncle, uncle!' until, my patience exhausted, I had to threaten them off with a stick.

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CHAPTER III

FIRST IMPRESSIONS OF ANTI-BOLSHEVIST RUSSIA

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In the middle of December, 1919, I crossed the Black Sea from Batum to Novorossisk on the Italian steamer 'Cleopatra,' a comfortable boat that in the old days used to run to India for the Austrian Lloyd. Impatient to get on shore, I went off in the first boat that boarded us after the haphazard Russian doctor had given us a clean bill of health. It was about four in the afternoon. Novorossisk made a poor impression. Dilapidated houses; long straggling streets, deep in mud; shabby people and dirty carriages—after the brightness and bustle of Batum and the ship-shapeness of the 'Cleopatra,' one felt a very considerable change for the worse. It was an unappetising first sight of Denikin's territory.

At one street corner I stopped outside a police station, at the barred windows of which a number of miserable, ragged prisoners were standing and appealing for cigarettes. Soldiers stood about on sentry duty, all of them, of course, carrying rifles, revolvers and at least a couple of bandoliers full of cartridges; others were walking the muddy streets, also armed to the teeth. They were wearing uniforms that in most cases were unmistakably of English origin, but always dirty and ragged.

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It was beginning to get dark, and I walked down to the waterside. As it was only five o'clock I anticipated little difficulty in getting aboard the 'Cleopatra' again, where my luggage was. She was at anchor in the harbour. But there were no small boats to be seen, and the Russian sentries on duty assured me that I should not find one, since at Novorossisk everything ends at dusk, and any boat that took me on board would most likely be arrested on its return on suspicion of smuggling. I stumbled along the muddy quay from pier to pier, wet to the knees. Somewhere near by a shot rang out. Presumably some one had failed to answer a sentry's challenge, or the sentry had, as not uncommonly happened in these parts, fired first and challenged afterwards.

After an hour and a half of fruitless searching I decided to go on board a Russian merchantman that had been converted into a warship, and to ask them if they would permit me to go off to the 'Cleopatra' in one of their boats. The officer on duty, a pleasant youth, was sympathetic, and called up the chief officer to see me. This was an amazing individual, who was dressed and behaved like a stage villain, and whose strut would have delighted an English music-hall audience. He was dressed half as a soldier and half as a sailor; a long black moustache curled across his cheeks. He told me peremptorily that his boat would get wet if he put it into the water, and sent off a sailor with me to find the Port Commandant, who might, it was thought, be able to help me out of my predicament. This sailor who accompanied

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me was also a queer medley. He explained to me as we stumbled along the quays that he was not really a sailor but an artilleryman, who had recently been transferred into the navy. All the old sailors, he said, were in the Red Armies, while the men now manning the boats were mostly soldiers.

We walked and walked. The sailor did not know where to find the Port Commandant, and all the sentries we asked drawled unanimously in reply: 'We don't know . . . Who knows? . . . God knows.' At last, at half-past seven, I sent the sailor away and took a cab out to the headquarters of the British Military Mission, a mile or two away round the bay in some empty cement works. Twice or more as we drove along shots sounded not far away from us, and the driver assured me that after midnight the road was not safe.

I got talking to the driver. 'Such times,' he said, 'terrible times. Look at the price that hay is!'

'Was it better when the Bolshevists were here?' I asked.

'Ai! No,' he answered.

'But surely they didn't do anything to you?' I said.

'No—o, they didn't do anything to us. It was bad for the bour—jee—oo'—he struggled with the word—'but not for us.'

'Did they pay you well?'

'Yes, sometimes they paid us well, and sometimes they didn't pay at all. And now it's just the same. Some of the officers who ride about

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here pay us well, and some don't pay at all—devil take them all.'

'So it's all the same for you, as it was under the Bolshevists or as you are now?'

'Hm, no. The Bolshevists used to take you and put you up against a wall and shoot you—yes, just say a word, and they put you up against the wall. Every day I used to see them putting people up against the wall and shooting them—for nothing. Why, once they even put me up against the wall; but I said: "Shoot me if you like, but what good will it do you? I've got nothing in the world except my whip." And they let me go.'

'Well,' said I, 'and what is going to happen in the future?'

'We cannot tell. God alone can know. . . . But I think it will be worse yet. You're an Englishman, aren't you? Yes? Well, then, send us the Tsar back! In the old days no one touched what was yours, and you didn't touch any one else's, but now . . . O God!' (How many times have I heard these identical words repeated by Russian workmen and peasants in the last few months!) 'Nicholas is in England; the people know it. Until we have him back, we shall not have order.'

He would not believe that the Tsar was dead. He shook his head sagely when I assured him of it. 'Oh, no,' he said, 'you have him safe in England! The people know.'

This was a remarkable introduction to 'revolutionary Russia.' I heard the same sort of thing

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very often; there is not a workman and peasant in Russia who does not look back with longing at the good old times. But this is, perhaps, rather evidence of their short memories than of anything else; after all, they are just the same about the Bolshevists. When the Bolshevists rule them, they welcome the Volunteer Army with enthusiasm. After a month or two of the Volunteers, they are ready to welcome the Bolshevists again, all old scores being already forgotten. In another month they wish the Volunteers had stayed! They are primitive people politically, and would associate one party with fine weather and the other with rain, if their presence happened to coincide with different sorts of weather.

At the Mission I was fed and given a bed; and the next day I got a boat and went on board the 'Cleopatra' for my luggage. But before I could get it on deck, the scourge of Novorossisk made its appearance—the so-called 'Nord-Ost,' a bitterly cold north-east wind that covers the tops of the hills with thick clouds and lashes the waves of the harbour into foam. So enormous is the strength of this wind that, just before my arrival, it actually blew half a dozen British Tanks off a breakwater into the sea. We were marooned on the ship in the middle of the harbour for three days waiting for the wind to go down.

From Novorossisk I took the train up to Rostov. There was only one train a day, and this left at an undetermined time in the evening. I drove down to the station with my baggage at five o'clock, when it was due to leave according to the

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time-table, but it was not until midnight that I actually got on board.[1] During this long wait I had a good chance to observe present-day conditions of railway travelling in Russia. Half the train seemed to be reserved for Russian officers travelling on duty. But do not imagine that these travelled in comfort and luxury! On the contrary, they were crowded pell-mell into old third-class coaches, unheated, dirty, and without cushions. Ordinary third-class travellers were still worse off. They fought their way into the carriages, shouting and weeping; when the carriages were so packed that not another available inch remained, the rest struggled for a place on the platform between the coaches, on the buffers, on the roof of the coaches, and even on the front of the engine. What they must have suffered during the night from the wind and the cold is indescribable. Thousands of men and women have fallen off trains during the last two years, frozen to death.

I myself was fortunate. A party of English officers, who were going up the line, were kind enough to take me into one of their compartments, and I travelled in comparative comfort. I never again travelled so well in Russia, for conditions

[1] There were at least five 'times' in use at Novorossisk: (1) Local time; (2) Ships' time; (3) Petrograd time—standard throughout Russia for railways and officially used by the Volunteer Army; (4) Cement Works' time, announced by hooters every hour; (5) British Mission time, according to the Mission clocks, which were unreliable. There was about 1½ hours' difference between the fastest and slowest of these times, the others coming in the middle. It was, therefore, difficult to keep appointments, though one could always excuse oneself for being late by the explanation that one had thought the hour arranged was by such or such a 'time.'

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were daily growing worse. The only other people who were comfortable were a few gentlemen in fine, thick fur coats, travelling with any amount of luggage. During my wait at the station I had seen them bribing the luggage controllers to book their baggage through at considerably under the proper rates. These were notorious speculators. They were on good terms with all the railway and police officials, and, indeed, with everybody whose business it was to keep an eye on them and prevent them carrying out their 'speculation.' Wherever they went they sowed corruption and confusion. Thus, for example, when trucks were wanted to carry urgent military stores to the Front, they were not to be found; nevertheless, you heard of plenty of trucks going up the line full of speculators' wares. They gambled in the necessities of life, and even in luxuries, since the latter were often more profitable; thus, in Rostov, when I was there, common objects of utility were scarce, whereas Paris soaps and scents were in every shop-window.

Between Novorossisk and Rostov the railway line traverses the country of the Kuban Cossacks and part of the Don Cossack territory. The Kubans, when I was passing through, had just seen the end of an unsuccessful Separatist adventure on the part of some of their politicians. There was still a customs house at the railway house where the line left the Kuban territory and entered the Don country. Half a dozen officials went through the train, searching the passengers and their luggage. They came to a truck in which

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were a dozen men and women. The men were employed on the railway and were being sent up to Rostov for some job or other. Naturally, knowing that flour was dear and difficult to obtain there, they had each taken with them a sack of flour to live on until they returned. The Kuban customs officials, several of them drunk, stormed the truck and began to throw out the bags of flour into the snow. The men began to shout, the women to weep and the children to howl. One or two local Kuban Cossacks ran up, each with a whole armoury of weapons upon his person. The customs officials, too, had revolvers and daggers. Some of the women ran off to the Chief of the Customs to put their case before him; meanwhile the Cossacks threw back the flour into the truck as fast as the customs men put it out. Tempers were rising, and I expected soon to see the revolvers at work.

'Why,' said one of the Cossacks to me, 'just look at them! Last week General Shkuro and his 'Wolves' passed through here and chased these men out of the station and into the steppe. And now they dare to come back again!'

'Yes,' broke in one of the women, 'they are worse than the Bolshevists!'

On the platform, however, a compromise was being reached. A bottle was handed round, and the order was given to replace the flour in the truck; and, after a delay, the train started again and we left the confines of the Kuban. At the last moment an old peasant woman ran up to me and asked me to pull a basket into the coach in

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which I was travelling. I did so and then gave her a hand. 'What is in the basket?' I asked suspiciously, as the train gathered speed. 'Butter, my dear,' she replied with a grin. 'It cost 80 roubles a pound here, and I can sell it in Rostov for 120.' 'You're a speculator!' I cried, shaking my finger at her. She roared with laughter. 'Well, what about it?' she said. 'Who isn't a speculator nowadays?'

At last we reached Rostov-on-the-Don (so called to distinguish it from another Rostov near Moscow). I fought my way through the crowded station and took a cab into the town. In a few minutes I was knocking at the door of my friend, Mr Ouspiensky. He is a Russian writer who has published one or two books in English also; he is an authority on such subjects as the fourth dimension—if one can be an expert on such intangible things—and has written some entertaining books on India and Indian philosophy.[1] I have had the pleasure of knowing him for some years, in India, England, and pre-Revolutionary Russia. A brilliant series of letters he had sent to the *New Age*, the London weekly, describing conditions in South Russia in the summer and autumn of 1919, made me particularly want to renew his acquaintance. He received me cordially and at once invited me to share his room. I said I would not trouble him, but would go to a hotel. He laughed.

[1] A translation of his book, *Tertium Organum*, was published in America (Manas Press, Rochester, N.Y.) just about the time when I was with him in Rostov. He is now in one of the Russian Refugees' Camps near Constantinople.

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'You cannot get a room in a hotel in Russia to-day,' he said; 'they have all been requisitioned by the Government or by officers.'

'And in private houses?'

'The same thing. Every flat in Rostov has been searched by the billeting officials. They leave one room for each married couple, if these are lucky, and commandeer the rest for officers. I am in this room myself only until to-morrow. The officer who has requisitioned it is a friend of mine, and he has lent it to me for a few days. But he is returning to-morrow, and then we must look out for a new room, if we can find one.'

I looked blank. Were we to spend the next night in the street? Ouspiensky smiled at my consternation.

'Don't worry,' he said; 'we shall find a place somewhere. I can see that you are new to the country. For the last two years nobody worries about what will happen to him to-morrow. These are not like the old days when you and I used to meet in Petrograd, and even made appointments two or three days in advance. Never mind, you will soon get used to it. Wait till you have lived under the Bolshevists, as I have! I tell you that until you have experienced Bolshevism, you don't know what the world really contains. Fancy thinking about what will happen to-morrow! What a strange idea!'

Ouspiensky showed me his possessions. They consisted of the clothes he was wearing (principally a rather ragged frock-coat, a remnant of former fortunes), a couple of extra shirts and pairs of

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socks, one blanket, a shabby overcoat, an extra pair of boots, a tin of coffee, a razor, a file and whetstone, and a towel. He assured me that he considered himself exceptionally fortunate to have so much left. On the next day we transferred our belongings to a new dwelling he had discovered for us. This consisted of two small rooms over a kind of barn in the courtyard of a big house. They had been requisitioned by an officer who, having to go up-country on duty for a week or so and being afraid of losing them in the meantime, had lent them to a friend, who in turn hospitably invited Ouspiensky and myself to share them with him. In any other place, at any other time, I would have turned up my nose at the rooms. They were small, very cold and draughty, and excessively inconvenient. To get to them one had to ring the porter's bell; he then emerged from his quarters and drove a couple of ferocious dogs into their kennel, after which he would unlock the gate and let us in. When we wanted to go out, we had to go through the same ritual. Sometimes, when the porter was busy or asleep or drunk, one could spend a quarter of an hour outside in the snow, or inside one's door, with a chorus of barking dogs for company. To crown our troubles, the landlord of the house suddenly sent over to tell us to go away, on the ground that we had no right to occupy the barn at all.

In a sense he was right, but we knew exactly what his reason was; he wanted to let the rooms at a fabulous amount to some rich refugee from Bolshevist Russia. We determined to forestall

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him, and the way we did it will demonstrate fairly clearly how one lives nowadays in Russia. I was sent off in the morning to the Commandant of the Rostov Garrison, General Tarassenkov, who was in charge of all the requisitioning of rooms. I told him that I was an English journalist and in need of a room. Wearily he told me that there were no rooms to be had in Rostov, but he gave me the right to requisition one if I could find it. I told him I thought I knew of a house with some rooms in it, and he promptly sent an officer with me to see. I took him to the house in the garden of which we were staying, and with great dignity the two of us went through the owner's apartments, inquiring who was in each room. All the rooms appeared to be occupied, although I fancied that some of the apparent occupiers were what the Russians call 'dead souls,' *i.e.* people who no longer existed (the term is taken from Gogol's famous book). However, the officer who was with me turned out to be a friend of the houseowner, and took care not to put awkward questions. In any case, my purpose was served; I was sure that the landlord would no longer dare to order us out of his barn.

And so it proved. During the week or two we spent in Rostov the 'bourjooee' landlord made no further attempt to recover his premises. Our next problem was to get fuel. The rooms were icily cold; draughts blew in every direction; and coal was practically unobtainable in Rostov owing to the breakdown of the transport system. Our host, one Zaharov, got to work to obtain a permit

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for fuel; soon he returned with a paper that entitled some engineer or other to be given a ton and a half of coal from the Government stores at a greatly reduced price. How Zaharov came into possession of this paper I do not know, and I took care not to inquire. Ouspiensky and I went next morning to the treasury of the Don Government to pay in the money. After three hours' waiting in a queue, we were able to pay and get a receipt. This was handed to me, as the least occupied member of the party, to take to the local engineer's office and to obtain a ticket for the coal in exchange for it. It was nearly two o'clock on Saturday afternoon when I reached the office. A clerk kept me waiting for a few minutes until the clock struck; then he looked up and said that I was too late and would have to wait until Monday. I pointed out that I had been waiting some minutes already and proposed that he should give me the ticket I wanted. After some grumbling, he reluctantly opened his book. Then he took my receipt from the Treasury, totted up the total carefully, and announced triumphantly that he could not give me the ticket after all, because I had paid sixty kopecks too little. Now, the whole sum had been some seven hundred roubles, and sixty kopecks were, in any case, only worth a fraction of a penny! I told him that I had waited three hours at the Treasury that morning; he replied, with a smile, that I should have to wait another three hours on Monday to pay in the sixty kopecks! This very characteristic example of Russian officialdom did not impress

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me as perhaps he expected it to do, and I demanded to see his superior. Oh, impossible; the Chief Engineer never saw any one without an appointment. So I knocked at the door and walked in. The Chief Engineer was all affability; delighted to meet an Englishman at any time; what could he do for me, and so on. I explained the matter of the sixty kopecks; he roared with laughter, apologised, and called in the official. He then solemnly authorised him to receive the sum of sixty kopecks—approximately one-eighth of a penny—from me, and told him to issue me with the ticket. The official got to work slowly to make out the ticket, but took the opportunity to remark to a lady who was sitting in the office that really the English were becoming unbearable; not only did they receive coal officially, but they actually had the impertinence to come and ask for it privately as well. I begged him not to make incorrect statements about my countrymen and myself in my presence, whereupon he and the lady rebuked me severely for interrupting a private conversation. They said that it was indelicate on my part. This was all part of the task of getting the coal, I thought; so I must be patient. He gave me the ticket at last, but when I offered him a five rouble note (worth about three farthings) in payment, he said that I must give him exactly sixty kopecks, neither more nor less. I said I would call for the change on Monday. Then I hurried off in a cab to the coal dump, which was at the other end of the town. Here I met with a new series of obstructions.

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No one doubted that the receipt entitled me to the coal, that I had paid for it, and that I was waiting to take it away; but it seemed that the clerk had filled up some part of the ticket not quite correctly, and they suggested that I should come back again on Monday. The prospect of wasting another day on the job, of undertaking another expensive drive out to the suburbs, and, especially, of spending the week-end in a temperature below freezing point, did not appeal to me, and I exerted all my powers to obtain the coal. At last I succeeded in breaking through the red tape—chiefly, I am afraid, on the ground that, as a foreigner, I had been unable to understand all the intricacies of Russian coal control.

I now set off gaily to walk back to Rostov with a ton or so of coal on a cart beside me. The carter assured me privately that he had put on quite a hundredweight more coal than I was entitled to, and asked my permission to load a little on the cart for himself. I made no objection; and he put on two huge lumps. As soon as we got clear of the depot, he stopped the cart in front of a private coal store, carried in the two lumps to the proprietor, and rejoined me with the pleasing news that he had received 200 roubles for them. I reflected that he was doing on a small scale only what very many officials were then doing on a large scale in Russia.

I asked the carter what he thought about things in general, and discovered that he had been conscripted for the Bolshevist army in Kharkov, captured by the Volunteers in the autumn, and

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by them given the choice of fighting in their armies or of going to work behind the lines. He was not a fighting man, and had gladly chosen the second alternative. I asked him what he thought of the Bolshevists as contrasted with the Volunteers, and he replied that the chief thing to him was that most factories in Bolshevist Russia did not work, whereas those in the anti-Bolshevist parts did, to some extent. Beyond this he did not seem to take much interest in the matter. I asked him who he thought would come out winners. 'Oh,' he said, 'the Bolshevists, for sure. You see, they have warm clothes.'

I arrived home in triumph with my ton of coal, much to the admiration of myself and my friends. For once, sheer aplomb had broken through the meshes of Russian official procedure, and we had got in one day what might have taken a month or two with less aggressive methods. In high glee, we called in the man who attended to the fires of the whole household. He was a taciturn man from Moscow, grimy with coal dust. Accustomed to deal with wood fires, this coal fuel was rather beyond his powers, and we soon had occasion to notice that he was more skilful in extinguishing the fire than in keeping it alight. In fact, we began to get frightened whenever he came to look at it. A few glasses of home-made vodka—a drink unobtainable in shops, by General Denikin's orders—soon thawed him, and I was able to draw him out a little. He had come down south, he said, to get out of Bolshevist Moscow, because 'you can't get anything to eat there.'

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A lot of factory workers, he said, especially those who had returned trom prisoners' camps in Germany, had made demonstrations against the Bolshevists, but in the factory where he had been working the ringleaders had been arrested by a special detachment of the Red Guard, led away, and never seen again. Every 'more sensible' person, he said, was opposed to the Bolshevists, but the young firebrands were with them. 'But,' he added, 'if only the Volunteers had got as near to Moscow as Tula, all Moscow would have risen and cast off the Bolshevists.' He was irritated at the thought of the Bolshevists advancing on Rostov. 'It means we shan't have anything to eat again!'

The fire had a wonderful effect upon our spirits. Living as one did in Russia, from hour to hour, a good fire was a thing to make a fuss about. We had found a quantity of spirit in one of the cupboards in the room, and, despite Zaharov's protests, Ouspiensky proceeded to transform it into vodka with the addition of some orange peel. He told Zaharov that the real owner would never get back to Rostov in time to use it before the Bolshevists came—a prophecy which proved to be accurate—and that, if we did not drink it, the Commissars would. So we began to drink it.

'People have been drinking since the beginning of the world,' remarked Ouspiensky suddenly; 'but they have never found anything to go better with vodka than a salted cucumber.'

With which remark he entered upon a series of

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reminiscences of his life in Moscow in the happy days before the War, which sounded queerly when one contrasted them with the misery and privations he and every one else was now enduring. There was nothing of the reactionary in Ouspiensky's praise of the good old days; his sister had died in prison as a political offender, and he himself had been no stranger to the revolutionary movement. One has to visit Russia, stay there a while and spend one's time with Russians, to understand what the last six years have meant to them. But I am interrupting Ouspiensky.

'It was when I was a young man in Moscow,' he was saying, 'and my cousin once gave a party. We brewed the vodka together. It was a marvellous brew. There was one man there, the sort of type one sees only in Russia; a young man with long hair, a long beard, long moustaches, and a sad, far-away look in his eyes. Well, after he had one glass of our vodka, he got straight up from his chair and walked out of the house and into the nearest hairdresser's. There he made them run the clippers all over his head, and shave him, and he came out as bare of hair as an egg, and went straight home to bed. That shows you what good vodka can do!

'By the way,' he said, 'did you ever hear of the Chief of Police here in Rostov just after the outbreak of the Revolution. One of his clerks found him in his office, examining some documents very carefully. At last he looked up and said, scratching his head, "Ye—es, I can understand that the proletariat of the world ought to unite; but what

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I can't understand is why they should want to unite at Rostov-on-the-Don."'

'To-night,' remarked Zaharov with equal gravity, 'we shall have hot water. We shall be able to wash our faces, clean our teeth, and indulge in all sorts of similar unaccustomed amusements.'

'Don't interrupt me,' said Ouspiensky. 'I was remarking that every policeman in Moscow in the old days knew me by my Christian name, because, unlike most people, when I was drunk, I always tried to compose quarrels and not to start them. Besides, I used to give them big tips. And all the porters at the restaurants used to know me, and when there was a row on, they used to telephone to me to come round and stop it. One night I remember I got home with the left sleeve of my overcoat missing. How I lost it, and where, I have never discovered, although I have given the matter very careful thought. Indeed, I once thought of writing a book about it.'

'Well,' said I, 'where shall we be in a month's time, I wonder?'

They both turned on me. 'It's clear,' they said, 'you've never lived under the Bolshevists. If you had, you wouldn't ask that sort of question. You would acquire the sort of psychology that does not admit reflections of that kind.'

'And yet,' said Ouspiensky, 'when I was under the Bolsheviks last year, I did once consider the future. I was at Essentuki, in the North Caucasus. The Bolsheviks had requisitioned all the books in the place and taken them into the school there. I went to the Commissar and asked

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him to make me librarian. I had been schoolmaster there previously. You didn't know I had been a schoolmaster since the Revolution, did you? [He turned to me.] Yes, and I've been a house-porter, too. Well, the Commissar didn't quite know what a librarian was, but I explained to him. He was a simple man and began to be almost frightened of me when I told him that I had written books of my own. So he made me librarian and I put up a big notice on the door saying that this was the "ESSENTUKI SOVIET LIBRARY." My idea was to keep the books safe, without mixing them up, so that when the Bolshevists went away, they could be given back to their owners. I arranged them nicely, and spent my time reading some of them. Then one night the Cossacks came and drove the Bolsheviks out. I ran round to the school in spite of the firing and tore down the word "Soviet," for fear the Cossacks came and destroyed everything, and so it read simply "ESSENTUKI LIBRARY." And next day I started to hand the books back to their owners. Not a soul had been to the library all the time, so no harm was done in breaking it up.'

'Still,' said Zaharov, 'Bechhofer's question has a certain theoretical interest. I wonder where we shall be in a month's time.'

'You may wonder as much as you like,' said Ouspiensky; 'but you will never find better vodka than this.'

A month later I wrote the following entry in my diary:

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'I can answer my own question now. I am at Novorossisk, writing this. Ouspiensky is, I believe, at Ekaterinodar, trying to get his wife away to the comparative safety of the seashore. I do not know if I shall ever see him again, or where. Zaharov died three days ago of small-pox, contracted at Rostov at the very time when we were living with him. And the Bolsheviks are at Rostov.'

The story of the rise of the Volunteer Army under General Kornilov and General Alexeiev is one of the most thrilling things in Russian history. When one hears the tale from any one who took part in the famous Kornilov march through the Don and the Kuban in the spring of 1918, the daring feats of Kornilov and his men take their place among the epics.[1] Kornilov himself towers like a giant above all the other Russians of this period. The story of his life is well known. He was born and bred in a poor Cossack family in Siberia; made his way by sheer ability to the front rank of Russia's army leaders; distinguished himself both in the Japanese and the European War by his brave and brilliant generalship; was captured by the Austrians with the remnant of his men after saving a whole army from destruction; escaped from captivity in the disguise of an Austrian soldier; was chosen immediately after the Revolution to command the Petrograd garrison as the most popular general in Russia; resigned in disgust and returned to the Front; was made

[1] The best books dealing with this phase of the Civil War are P. M. Volkonsky's short *The Volunteer Army*, which has appeared in English, and A. Suvorin's *The Kornilov Campaign*, which I hope one day to translate.

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Commander-in-Chief of the armies; was betrayed (unconsciously perhaps) by Kerensky into an armed attempt to force the Government to restore discipline in the army and order at home; and was imprisoned with his staff at Byhov, whence he escaped on the eve of the Bolshevist triumph and rode across country to the Don and joined General Alexeiev in the attempt to form an anti-German and anti-Bolshevist army of officers and Cossacks. After this came the crowning events of his life. On the night of February 22nd, 1918, General Kornilov walked out of Rostov at the head of a force of volunteers, numbering about three and a half thousand men. This was the nucleus of the Volunteer Army which in the next year nearly drove the Bolshevists out of Russia altogether. They marched into the steppe, surrounded by large forces of Bolshevists, far more numerous, better armed and equipped than themselves. The next months saw a long succession of fights between Kornilov's volunteers and the enemy. Kornilov's wonderful leadership and the confidence he inspired among his men made them invincible. In spite of the gigantic odds against them (200,000 men against 3,000), they put such terror into the Bolshevists that the latter's forces used to break at their approach. More than once a dozen of Kornilov's men put to flight as many scores of the Bolshevists. All the romantic things that delight the reader of history are to be found in the fascinating annals of the Kornilov campaign. There is the story of the attack upon Novo-Dmitrievskaya, when the army

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swam across the icy river and attacked and put to flight the astonished Bolshevists. There is the story of the attack upon Ekaterinodar—but there is not space here even to mention the famous incidents of that campaign. Kornilov himself was killed by a shell outside Ekaterinodar on April 13th, 1918. Denikin, his trusted lieutenant, took over the command, but, good and brave man that he is, he was not Kornilov's equal.

By this time the Cossacks were in revolt against the Bolshevists. They came to the aid of the Volunteer Army, and slowly the tide of fortune changed. The Germans were in occupation of the South Russian towns, and though they made no objection to pro-German leaders, like General Krasnov, raising troops against the Bolshevists, they hindered the Volunteer Army, which repudiated Krasnov, from obtaining volunteers and aid from the German-occupied parts. In June, 1918, however, the Volunteers began to advance with an army of 12,000 men. On August 15 Ekaterinodar fell, and during the next month the Bolshevists were driven out of most of the other towns they had occupied in this district, including Novorossisk. General Alexeiev died in October, and General Denikin became sole leader. The advance continued. After the autumn of 1918 the German troops melted away westwards, and the Bolshevists and Volunteers fought for the territory they released. During the summer and autumn of 1919 the 'Armed Forces of South Russia' (*.i.e*, the Volunteer Army and the Cossacks) pushed forward

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on several fronts towards Moscow. They occupied Tsaritzin at the end of June and Kharkov at the beginning of July. The reception given to General Denikin on his entry at Kharkov was tumultuously enthusiastic.[1] Kiev fell in the first days of September. Soon after, Kursk and Orel were occupied. The latter town is only 240 miles from Moscow; and cavalry advanced to within 200 miles of the old capital.

It so happened that I left England for Russia in October, 1919, at the moment when the Volunteer Army was at the height of its success; another few weeks, it seemed, and the Bolshevists would cease to rule in Moscow, and Russia would be free again. But I went all the way by sea, and by the time I reached Russia, the tide had turned, and the Volunteers were being thrown back even more swiftly than they had previously advanced. It was their own speed which betrayed them; instead of advancing deliberately and consolidating their positions as they went along, their generals, deluded by success, pushed on so fast that the Bolshevist Staff, assisted by German experts, was able to execute a series of brilliant flanking movements, which, coupled with the disorders of the 'Green Guards' in Denikin's rear, soon turned its advance into a retreat. By Christmas, 1919, the fighting was back again at Rostov. Both sides were at their last gasp; exhaustion, disease and corruption had destroyed

[1] An eyewitness of this, who was far from being a partisan of Denikin, was M. Devdariani, a prominent Georgian Socialist (better known by his pseudonym in the Russian Revolutionary movement, 'San').

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their discipline and *morale*; even then, with a little more luck and better leadership, the Volunteers might have been in Moscow instead of the Bolshevists being in Rostov. It was unlike any other war, or rather unlike any other stage of the Great War; neither side conquered by its own strength, but by the weakness of its opponents—a very different thing.

General Denikin himself is acknowledged by all who know him to be an honourable and disinterested patriot, whose one aim was to free Russia from its present troubles. His weakness was that he was a soldier and no statesman. He is said to have complained to one of his advisers that 'You bring so and so to me, and tell me that he is a well-known statesman; but I have never even heard of him. I am a soldier and have never taken any interest in your politics.' For this reason many of the men who took a high place in the civil councils of the Volunteer Army were not the sort of men who should have been there. Even the egregious Kerensky testified to Denikin's honesty, and therefore it may be supposed that he took seriously Denikin's declaration that, should Kerensky dare to show himself in the territory occupied by the Volunteer Army, he would immediately be shot as a traitor to Russia! As for the notion that Denikin was aiming at the restoration of the old régime, you needed only to spend a few days in Russia to see what folly it was to suppose that shrewd men, as we may suppose that reactionaries often are, would make the mistake of supposing that such a thing was possible.

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The chief cause of the defeat of the Volunteer Army was the too rapid advance in the autumn of 1919. But contributing causes were the disorganisation at the rear and the demoralisation of the whole people. These were bound together. Five long years of war, hunger, terror and disease, had sapped the soul of the Russian nation. Few Russians were any longer able or willing to stand the strain of further sacrifice. One may find other reasons for the Volunteers' defeat—the presence of too many 'dug-outs' among their generals; though, to tell the truth, these old incompetents were not always employed in responsible positions; the absurdly low rates of pay for officers and men, which almost forced them to steal or speculate; the corruption of the railway officials;[1] the fact, insufficiently recognised in Western Europe, that most of the best men in Russia have long since been killed off by the Germans and the Bolshevists; but, when all is said, the demoralisation of the Russian people is at the root of most of their troubles to-day. There was no longer any fire in them; except in rare cases they were weary,

[1] I once asked some Russian railway officials what could be done to save the situation on the railways. (It was generally believed that the officers of the British Railway Mission had offered to take over the control of Denikin's railways and that the offer had been refused by his jealous officials. It was, as a matter of fact, rejected both at home and by the Russians, for different reasons.) 'The proposal came too late,' one of them replied; 'even if you had insisted on it, instead of just offering it, it would have been too late. To remove corruption from our railways now, you would need to shoot nine out of ten of our railway officials, and then there would not be enough left to carry on.' I think he underestimated the possible influence of a few 'examples.'

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exhausted and worn out.[1] They have long since used up all their reserves of energy. Only a miracle can save Russia from becoming another and huger Balkans, a centre of misery for itself and of trouble for every one else.

I was in Rostov in December, 1919, when the panic commenced. For days all sorts of rumours had been going round the town. The Bolshevists had broken through the lines; they were advancing at full speed on the town; and so on. The authorities told us not to worry; they assured us that the position at the front gave no cause for alarm, and all the other usual quieting things. Then Kharkov fell, and thousands of unhappy refugees came down the line with the usual tale of official over-confidence culminating in panic, of cowardice, treachery, and betrayal. We learnt that the official statement that Kharkov had been successfully evacuated was not true; one English merchant alone had lost forty trucks full of goods! Then towns and villages fell one after another into the Bolshevists' hands. The war maps in the shop windows showed an ever-narrowing circle around Taganrog, Rostov, Tsaritzin, and Novocherkask. Crowds flocked to the railway station to try to get away, and the railway people did a roaring trade in selling and re-selling tickets. Refugees poured in homeless, half-starved and freezing. The

[1] It is frequently asserted that General Denikin's land policy was responsible for his downfall. This is an exaggeration. Certainly his land policy was ill-advised; the unpopular clause, was one by which a small proportion of their land was restored to the old dispossessed landowners for their personal use. But it was apathy, rather than ill-feeling, that was chiefly the cause of Denikin's failure.

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railway station became a hotbed of typhus which spread through the town. All 'Kerensky' money disappeared from the shops, because people were hoarding it against the coming of the Bolsheviks, who accepted it as currency, whereas Denikin money was not accepted.[1] As the peril came nearer, the exodus from the city commenced. Three long black lines of people stretched across the snow.[2] The first was along the railway line in the direction of Ekaterinodar; thousands of people, despairing of getting on to trains, set out daily on foot along the rails. The second line was across the frozen waters of the Don River and into the steppe. The third was southwards towards the sea. Thousands upon thousands of unhappy people, some of whom had been fleeing for weeks before the advancing Bolshevists, set out again, without friends, without provisions or clothing. It would be senseless to brand these people as rich 'bourgeois,' fleeing from a revengeful populace; most of them had no longer a penny in the world, whatever their former fortunes had been, and many of them were working men and peasants who had sampled Bolshevist rule and wished only to escape from its second coming.

At one big town in South Russia terrible scenes

[1] It is pleasing to know that, when the Bolshevists did enter Rostov, they decided to recognise all sorts of paper money equally, so the speculators lost heavily on their purchases of 'Kerenskies.' This is the only occasion I can remember when the speculators were really discomfited, unless we reckon the famous occasion in 1919 when General Wrangel hanged a corrupt stationmaster, with his speculator accomplices.

[2] 'What an advertisement this would make for "Black and White" whisky,' an English eyewitness remarked to me.

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took place when the town was evacuated. As the last Russian hospital train was preparing to leave one evening, in the dim light of the station lamps some strange figures were seen crawling along the platform. They were grey and shapeless, like big wolves. They came nearer, and with horror it was recognised that they were eight Russian officers ill with typhus, dressed in their grey hospital dressing-gowns, who, rather than be left behind to be tortured and murdered by the Bolshevists, as was likely to be their fate, had crawled along on all fours through the snow from the hospital to the station, hoping to be taken away on a train. Inquiries were made, and it was found (so I was told) that, as usually happened, several hundred officers had been abandoned in the typhus hospitals. The moment the Volunteer Army doctors had left the hospitals, the orderlies had begun to amuse themselves by refusing the unhappy officers all attention. What would have happened to them when the mob discovered them is too horrible to be thought of.

Parties were sent back to carry the officers down to the train. The doctor in charge of the train refused to allow them to be put on it, on the ground that it was full. The train was searched, and it was found that though it had its prescribed complement of sick, there was still plenty of room for these unfortunates. And in one compartment were discovered a civilian and three ladies, the latter busily manicuring their nails. They had bribed the doctor to give them the places. Indignant hands flung them out upon the platform,

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with the taunt that, as they had not been willing to aid the Volunteer Army, let them go and help the Bolshevists. As for the doctor, he was taken to the carriage door, shot through the arm and thrown out. Some nurses, however, took pity on him and pulled him into the train again and bound up his wound. Only two officers, both on the point of death, were left behind in the hospital, though both begged pitiably to be taken away or killed before the Bolsheviks came.

No one who has seen the panic in a South Russian town before the Bolsheviks' coming, is likely ever to forget the sensation. It teaches one more about what has happened in Russia during the last three years than a thousand books.

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CHAPTER IV

LIFE AT ROSTOV AND TAGANROG

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CHAPTER IV

LIFE AT ROSTOV AND TAGANROG

I REMEMBER Rostov in 1915 as a clean, spacious and aggressively new city. It happened that the first day or two that I spent there in December, 1919, was fine and the town showed to its best advantage. Still, the change was remarkable. The broad, grey streets were packed with people; but these were shabbier and in every way unhappier than five years before. You could read despair and misery or, worse still, demoralisation in their faces. A very few were well dressed; but most of them, officers, soldiers, and civilians alike, were clad in British private soldiers' uniforms. Officers had their badges pencilled upon their shoulder-straps, or had affixed their Russian epaulettes to the new uniforms. Rostov has normally a population of some 200,000 persons. Now, in consequence of the influx of people from other towns, there must have been nearly a million and a half. Two streams met in Rostov. There were the thousands of people who had hoped to return to Central Russia in the wake of a victorious Volunteer Army, and there were the many thousands more who had fled south from the battle-zone the moment that the Volunteers had shown signs of retreating before the Bolshevists. Rostov was packed. You could not get a room

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anywhere; everything was requisitioned. Half the shops and cafés in the main streets had been requisitioned as barracks for troops, whom you could observe through the plate-glass windows, eating or sleeping. Other shops were used for propaganda; huge maps, usually rather too optimistic, showed the latest position at the Front. Over some of the shops you could read some of the best known names from the Nevsky Prospect in Petrograd; Rostov, as the popular saying went, was the new capital of Russia. Except for the general shabbiness and the preponderance of khaki life was fairly animated. Trams were running; there were plenty of open-air markets; there were theatres and lectures and restaurants; you could take your choice of half a dozen newspapers, though both extreme Right and Bolshevist organs were prohibited. I often met refugees from Bolshevist Russia, walking about as if in a dream. Rostov, they said, was paradise to them after their two years' incarceration in the agonised and deadly dull confines of the Soviet districts.

There were not many British officers to be seen in the streets, the British Mission being mainly concentrated at Taganrog. However, there was the office of the railway mission, under General Brough, on the main street, and I used sometimes to meet officers from it. And, of course, officers often came in from Taganrog. They all seemed very happy; they found Russia curious but pleasing. Thanks to the exchange, they were living like millionaires on their pay and special allowances for expenses. To me, living in all important

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respects the life of a Russian inhabitant, conditions seemed less pleasant. Prices were appalling. How Russians were expected to live when their monthly pay scarcely sufficed to buy food for a week, I do not know. Their pay, too, was often months in arrears. Everywhere, I found misery, suspicion, and demoralisation. They had forgotten how to be amused. I invited Ouspiensky to accompany me to a restaurant. We sat there rather uncomfortably, for the place was bare and cold, and you were not allowed to buy drinks in restaurants, although you might purchase wine—not vodka—in shops. There were sounds of a merry party in one of the screened 'cabinets' of the restaurant; and afterwards a couple of tipsy men came out with two ladies. But we sat there uncomfortably. My friend from long lack of practice had lost all interest in a menu; bread and coffee and a slice of sausage had been for so long his only food that he no longer cared what he ate. I ordered the standard Rostov dishes, caviare and sturgeon, but somehow, under those circumstances, I felt I would as soon have joined my friend at home in a meal of bread, sausage, and coffee. And indeed, after this first attempt, we rarely did otherwise. He never went out for meals; but I occasionally went to the restaurant of the Palace Hotel for lunch. In that brilliantly lighted room one did get the fleeting notion that one was back again in the gourmandising Russia of the old days.

Except for these occasional meals I rarely ever went out into the 'gay world' of Rostov. It was only very young people or rich speculators who

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went about to amusements there. The rest of us sat at home or went out on long conversational visits to our friends, and discussed the latest rumours. Never have I known such a crop of rumours as was at Rostov. We did not believe the official reports in the papers or on the propaganda maps, and there was no enemy wireless to judge by. Consequently, we sat and wondered and listened to the strangest pieces of information. It was a tense and terrible moment. The advance of the Volunteer Forces which, a few weeks before, had brought them almost into Moscow, now seemed to be definitely checked, and the Bolshevist counter-attack was developing quite as rapidly as the original Volunteer thrust. Freedom and the revival of Russia, which had seemed within the immediate future, were now seen to be further off than ever. Would the Volunteer Forces hold? Would they succeed in forcing back the Bolshevist counter-attacks, and advance again upon unhappy Moscow? What was the *morale* of the Volunteer troops? And of the Bolshevists? And of the peasants and workmen behind the lines? You can see that there was plenty of scope for rumours and discussion, and you may be sure that nobody missed his chance. The most contradictory reports would be current at the same time. The Volunteer troops, we were told, were fleeing and deserting by thousands; but they had taken the offensive again and recaptured Kursk! Unfortunately, the pessimists turned out usually to be right.

The weather broke up, and made us more miserable than we had been before. Frost and thaws

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alternated, so that we were perpetually cold and wet. We all sneezed and coughed, and a large percentage got typhus. By Christmas time I do not suppose that there was a single house or flat in the whole of the south of Russia, from Novorossisk to Moscow, but had had its case of typhus. Many British officers were among the victims. The mortality was frightful; nothing could stop it. The infection was carried by lice. Very well, says the reader, it is easy enough to guard against lice; you only need to wash often, take plenty of baths, change your clothes frequently, and avoid dirty places. But all these simple precautions were impossible. There was no fuel to thaw water or heat it for a bath, or to wash clothes in; water-pipes had frozen and burst; few people possessed spare shirts or underclothes; and, as for avoiding crowds, you could not move a step without running the risk of infection. The railway stations and the trains were the worst typhus-traps. Crowds of passengers and soldiers camped in the waiting-rooms and public halls. The bitter weather made them keep the windows shut, and the filth, the overcrowding, and the stinking atmosphere bred lice to perfection. Besides this, the habit of living in trains had grown. Everybody who could, took a railway coach to live in. They fitted up these vehicles, from splendid *wagons-lits* down to goods trucks, with stoves and kitchens, and lived in the railway sidings. They were thus spared the misery of hunting for unobtainable rooms, and at the same time they could move about in their own residence, either in the wake

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of the advancing army or before the approaching forces of the hated Bolshevists. But nobody was able to cope with the filth that resulted from this mode of living, with the result that every thaw turned the huge station-yards into sewage-fields. Such confusion, such filth, and such misery have never been seen as Russia has known in the last few years.

One of my first calls in Rostov was upon General Lukomsky, who was General Denikin's civil chief. I had a letter of introduction to him from M. Guchkov, who had been War Minister in the first Coalition Ministry after the Revolution in March, 1917, and was an old personal friend of the General. A gendarme—simply a soldier on patrol duty—showed me the way to a green-shuttered house at a street corner, and I sent in the letter and my card. I was invited inside. General Lukomsky was apparently not in the best of moods. His eyes glittered with distrust. The letter did not seem to have had much effect upon him. He asked me incuriously where M. Guchkov was. When he heard that I had come from Batum, he could not repress his ill-humour, and I had a long task in attempting to persuade him that the British forces in occupation there were not anti-Russian in general or anti-Denikinist in particular. I suggested that it was impossible for our small forces there to take up any definite line in regard to Russian affairs; the best we could do was to keep the peace and save Batum from anarchy. He appeared slightly mollified, and asked what I wanted. I said that, as an

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English correspondent, I should be grateful if he would give me facilities for observing and reporting upon conditions in anti-Bolshevist Russia. He refused point-blank to give me any help until I had approached the British Military Mission authorities at Taganrog; he excused himself by the statement that he had promised a certain British General not to do anything for unauthorised correspondents. He called in his *aide-de-camp*, a beautifully groomed youth, and ordered him to make out a permit for me to go to Taganrog and back. After I had received this paper, signed and countersigned by three or four colonels and generals, I thought that the best thing I could do would be to get into touch with the British representatives in Rostov itself. I had a letter of introduction to Major Pinder, the head of the British Economic Mission, and I asked the A.D.C. if he could direct me to that officer's headquarters. The following conversation ensued:—

I: I wonder if you could possibly tell me where Major Pinder's office is. He is the head of the British Economic Mission.

THE A.D.C.: Oh, yes. You know that, long before the War started, the Germans were preparing for it?

I (*extremely surprised*): Yes.

THE A.D.C.: They hoped to take us by surprise, and tried to find out everything about us, so that by a sudden attack they could defeat us.

I: That is, of course, the case. But would you excuse me now? I am really very pressed for time, if I am to try to see Major Pinder this

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morning. I wonder if you could possibly direct me to his office?

THE A.D.C.: I *am* directing you. That's just what I am doing.

I: Oh, I beg your pardon.

THE A.D.C.: Don't mention it; we are all liable to make mistakes, aren't we? Well, as I was saying, the Germans expected the War and were preparing for it for years beforehand. They wanted to have everything ready when the moment came. 'Der Tag,' you know. You've heard of 'Der Tag'?

I: Yes, I have. Excuse me——

THE A.D.C. (*blandly*): So the Germans founded a spy system all over Europe, in every country and every town. Sometimes they used private persons as their agents. Other times, they founded what they called commercial agencies. In London, I understand, they had secret agents of the ordinary type. Is that so?

I: I am really so sorry; but it's already twenty minutes to one. I shall hardly be able to catch Major Pinder this morning unless I go at once. Perhaps I can find somebody outside who can tell me where to find him.

THE A.D.C. (*rather nettled*): Am I not telling you? Well, in Petrograd the Germans had a sort of commercial agency, which was really a spy agency. Agents used to travel all over Russia—Germans, of course, under orders from Berlin—and then they would return to Petrograd and hand in their information to the central office there.

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I (*with determination*): No doubt; so I have heard. But you really must excuse me. It is getting late.

The A.D.C.: But do let me tell you where you can find Major Peendaire!

I: Please tell me, if you know.

The A.D.C.: Of course I know. But the actual name of the hotel has slipped my memory. That is what I am trying to tell you. There was a big hotel in Petrograd where the German agents used to meet when they returned from their expeditions. It was one of the best hotels in Petrograd. In fact, the German agents always did use the best hotels in most towns. Did they do so in London, do you know?

I (*shortly*): I don't know. Good-morning, and thank you very much.

The A.D.C.: Oh, don't go before I have told you where to find Major Meengaire. Tell me, what was the name of that big hotel in Petrograd, opposite the German Embassy?

I (*putting on my overcoat*): Do you mean the Astoria?

The A.D.C. (*calmly*): Yes, the Astoria. That's what I meant. You see, there's also an Astoria in Rostov, called so in imitation of the one at Petrograd. I don't know whether the Germans used it for spying before the War. No, I rather think they must have used the Palace Hotel. It's so much newer and better. But, as I was telling you, the Astoria is where Major Teebjaire lives!

This visit to General Lukomsky and my

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subsequent conversation with his A.D.C. were among my first impressions of official persons in South Russia. They hardly gave me a good opinion of the Russian authorities. Indeed, after this, I rarely again made any application to Russian officials, nor did I trouble to present the other letters that M. Guchkov had given me. I met Major Pinder before long, and at his advice I went off the following day to Taganrog.

There was what was popularly known as the 'lightning express' to Taganrog and back every day. Compared with the other trains, it was fast; but as it took two hours and more to cover the forty-five miles, and was liable to be delayed for as long again on the way, the title seemed a trifle ironical. Forcing my way through the thick crowds on the station, I climbed into one of the carriages which was reserved for members of foreign missions, and I made the journey in the company of numerous British officers, Frenchmen, Belgians, and others, among whom Polish officers were remarkable for the splendours of their uniforms and the magnificence of their bearing. They seemed too wonderful, in fact, to be real. The windows of the carriage were covered with steam, but one sometimes caught a glimpse of the frozen sea and the snow-covered fields.

At last we reached Taganrog, and scrambled out with pleasure from the stuffy, overcrowded carriages. Soldiers stood at the gates collecting and examining permits. An English officer piloted me across the dismal snowy flats of Taganrog into the town. The streets stretched on and on, broad

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and bare. Only a few sledges and occasional cavalrymen broke its monotony. The British Military Mission headquarters were unknown to every one I met, for my English guide had left me. But I found the huge school at last, with the Union Jack over it, and presented my introductions. I was taken into the presence of General Holman, the head of the Mission, a giant of a man, who looked over my head sympathetically; and within a few minutes I found myself informally attached to the Mission and safe from any interference from the local authorities.

Lest I should miss the returning 'lightning express,' I made my way quickly back to the station. Chehov's native town—he was born at Taganrog in 1860—seemed duller than ever, and I was glad to get inside the station buffet and order some lunch. It was poor and unappetising fare, but many people were clearly glad to be able to get it. A fever-shaken Sister of Mercy sat opposite me, eating greedily. Beside me was a poor officer, who had lost a leg and an arm, and was dressed in a dirty, patched uniform. An old couple stood by the window, in shabby clothes. He was a general, as one could tell from his old, red-lined military greatcoat, and the old lady was his wife. They were both eating out of the same plate of soup, which they balanced on the window-ledge, and they were clearly too poor to afford a plate each. The waiters and a few fat, warmly-clad speculators glanced at them superciliously. Had they dared to sit at the table, one felt they would not have been served. Their

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existence, it was clear, was one of miserable destitution, and both of them were too old to hope for anything better.

The train was delayed several times on its journey for half an hour or so, and it was late before I got back to Rostov station, its filth and its crowds. There was a rumour current that the station might be raided any evening by the Bolshevist or semi-Bolshevist bands who lived in the workmen's district around the station. These were known to have many rifles and machine-guns hidden away, and the Moscow Bolshevists were keeping them well supplied with money. However, there was no trouble that particular evening, except, of course, the normal one or two alarms and revolver shots. I risked the typhus-lice for once and took one of the dirty, tumble-down cabs that were waiting outside the station, and was carried up the long hill to my lodgings in the barn.[1] I noticed that the padded driver was a woman.

I had still two or three calls to pay in Rostov. Next day I went off to the British Vice-Consul's office, a room in one of the banks, and received a batch of letters and papers that had arrived for me from England. It was the first and last mail I received for five months. Mr Walton, the Vice-Consul, was well known among English civilians in the South of Russia for his amiability and helpfulness to all who called upon him. His was no easy work, protecting British interests in those

[1] British officers and men were forbidden to ride in public conveyances, for fear of contracting typhus.

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trying times. Every day it was becoming clearer that the Volunteer Forces were being routed. Town after town passed out of their possession as easily as they had taken it a month or two before. With every defeat, the disorganisation at the rear increased. Mr Walton had just been in conversation with a British merchant who had just arrived from Kharkov, and whose report was most discouraging. Towns and stores had fallen into the Bolshevists' hands like a ripe fruit. The Volunteer General, Mai-Maievsky, had published flamboyant circulars denying the possibility of the town's falling, and ordering every one to remain quietly at his work; but, meanwhile, his staff and everybody else in the know disappeared in their trains down the line to safety, and the bibulous old man himself went away. The British Railway Mission had just managed to get out in time.

With this bad news, I went round to call upon Dr Harold Williams, the correspondent of the *Times* and *Daily Chronicle*. Mrs Williams had arrived from England, where I had seen her only a short time before; but already they were beginning to wonder if they would not soon have to think about returning. Not that they were pessimistic. On the contrary, Dr Williams considered that the position at the Front was touch and go. The Bolshevists, he thought, might easily suffer a check and roll back to their bases, their forces minimised by desertion to the victors; or the present rout of the Volunteers might continue. On the whole, they were hopeful. So

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were most of the people whom I met at their hospitable table. Among these I noticed especially M. Peter Struve, the economist, whose acquaintance I had made in Moscow in 1915, when he was editing the famous monthly review, the *Russian Thought*. Like most of the other Russians I was meeting again, M. Struve seemed greatly aged.

I asked Dr Williams if he could advise me where to get a room in which I could do some work; I explained that our barn was not adapted for writing in the depths of winter. My question set the company laughing. There were no free rooms in Rostov, except, perhaps, those from which dead typhus patients had been removed. The flat in which Dr and Mrs Williams were living was overcrowded with British officers from the machine-gun school. The Mackinder Political Mission from England was expected daily at Rostov, but so far the Russian housing authorities had only been able to discover three or four rooms in different parts of the town in which to house the mission, which was supposed to consist of nearly a dozen people. Every one seemed pleased to think of the Foreign Office young men housed three or four in a room, seeing life like the rest of us, and there was the additional attraction that there would probably be a row with the Russian billetting authorities, after which a hotel might be allotted to Englishmen, and I might be able to secure a room or half a room in it.

Somebody gave me a note to one of the Russian

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'hotel commandants,' and I went off to him to try my luck. All the hotels in Rostov, as elsewhere, had been taken over by the Government, which apportioned the rooms among official personages and appointed officers in charge of each. The commandant of the Savoy Hotel, a rather second-rate place in a back street, was a young officer, who treated me, as an Englishman, with a certain amount of courtesy, but was arrogant with his other callers, a queue of whom waited patiently in the corridor. I had spoken to him in French, and in this language he invited me to wait for a few minutes in his room. While I was there, generals came in to request a lodging for themselves and their families; any place would do, they said, anywhere out of the cold of the street; some of them had just arrived from Kharkov and the north, fleeing before the Bolshevist advance. The Commandant could do nothing for them; he referred them to General Tarassenkov, the Governor of Rostov, who was in charge of all accommodation. They replied that it was Tarassenkov who had sent them to the Savoy. But in vain; he could offer them nothing. Then a pretty girl came in, and said she was a singer and had been sent to him by General Tarassenkov. The Commandant at first explained firmly that there was no room. Afterwards he suggested vaguely that, perhaps . . . on certain conditions, of course . . . The girl understood him perfectly; she was torn between repugnance and necessity. Had I been ignorant of the language they were speaking, I think their

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gestures and faces would have told me what was taking place. The girl went out at last, saying she would see if she could find anything else; if not, might she let him know in an hour's time. The commandant graciously assented. Then he turned to me. I replied to him in Russian, at which he had the grace to blush. He promised to try to give me a room in a couple of days, and I left him.

Outside was a patch of bills posted on the hotel wall. I read them incuriously. The first announced that M. Pureshkevich, the notorious reactionary leader in the old Dumas, would deliver a lecture upon 'England and the Russian Question.' As a matter of fact, the lecture never took place, because General Denikin, true to his allegiance, had no intention of allowing anti-British and pro-German propaganda to be conducted behind his lines. Pureshkevich and his friends were deeply incensed, but they could not move Denikin from his sturdy loyalty. Pureshkevich died soon afterwards of typhus, to the small loss of his country. The only useful action in his long political life was, perhaps, his share in the killing of Rasputin. Pureshkevich was rather less unpopular than usual about this time on account of Mr Lloyd George's latest excursions into foreign politics. The pro-German party in South Russia were publishing his speeches broadcast, to prove that England meant to abandon the Volunteers, and that the latter would, therefore, do best to get rid of General Denikin and his pro-Ally friends and cast in their lot with the Germans.

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The effect of Mr George's speeches was electrical.[1] Until that moment, the Volunteers and their supporters had comforted themselves with the idea that they were fighting one of the final phases of the Great War, with England still the first of their Allies. Now they suddenly realised with horror that England considered the War as over and the fighting in Russia as merely a civil conflict. In a couple of days the whole atmosphere in South Russia was changed. Whatever firmness of purpose there had previously been, was now so undermined that the worst became possible. Mr George's opinion that the Volunteer cause was doomed helped to make that doom almost certain. I read the Russian newspapers carefully every day, and saw how even the most pro-British of them shook at Mr George's blows. I am not concerned

[1] The speech of Mr George most offensive in Russian eyes was the one he delivered in the House of Commons on November 17, 1919. The speech as a whole is characteristically ambiguous, but the passage chiefly used by anti-British propagandists in South Russia was the following: 'Denikin and Kolchak have two great main objects. The first is the destruction of Bolshevism and the restoration of good government in Russia. Upon that he could get complete unanimity amongst all the forces. But the second is that he is fighting for a reunited Russia. Well, it is not for me to say whether that is a policy which suits the British Empire. There was a very great statesman, a man of great imagination, who certainly did not belong to the party to which I belong, Lord Beaconsfield, who regarded a great, gigantic, colossal, growing Russia rolling onwards like a glacier towards Persia and the borders of Afghanistan and India, as the greatest menace the British Empire could be confronted with.'

Mr George's adventures into foreign policy are usually naïve; but the lack of any sense of proportion shown in this speech is probably unique among even his utterances. It should be noted, too, that, in the same speech, he had referred to the aid given by England to the Volunteer Army as a debt of honour due to an Ally. And only a week before, at the Guildhall, he had said: 'I am not unmindful, and certainly Britain is not unmindful, of our

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to discuss here whether Mr George was right or not in endeavouring to shake clear of the Volunteer Army, but I emphasise the dishonourable way in which he gave his changed opinions to the world. At one blow, England changed, in the Russians' eyes, from a trusted Ally to a perfidious Power, careless of honour and allegiance. Mr Asquith's description of General Denikin as an 'adventurer' did not help matters. Denikin, with all his shortcomings, was neither self-seeking nor responsible for the anti-Bolshevist movement. The charge was grotesque. As for the Englishmen there, whatever our own opinions of our Russian commitments, or of isolated acts of the South Russian government, we all felt ashamed of the position in which the politicians at home were placing us by these cynical statements.

Another placard on the wall outside the hotel

obligations to the gallant men in Russia who helped us to fight the Germans when the Bolshevist leaders were betraying the Allies on that front.'

After reading some of Mr Lloyd George's later speeches about Russia, I could not help recalling a part of Trotsky's speech, delivered to the Soviet leaders, on February 27, 1918, during the Brest-Litovsk negotiations: 'Even if,' he said, 'the camp which Russia had joined on account of the international intrigues of Tsarism and the *bourgeoisie*—the camp, that is, at the head of which stands Great Britain—should come out of the War completely victorious (granting for the moment this rather improbable eventuality), it does not follow, comrades, that our country would also have come out victorious, since Russia, inside this victorious camp, would have been still more exhausted and ruined by the long-drawn-out war than it is now. The masters of that camp, who would have gathered all the fruits of victory—that is, England and America—would, in their treatment of our country, have displayed the same methods which were employed by Germany at the Brest-Litovsk peace negotiations. It would be absurd and childish, in appraising the policy of the imperialist countries, to start from other premises than their naked self-interest and material strength.'

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cheered me somewhat from the despondent thoughts that Pureshkevich's lecture notice had induced. 'A Lady from the Best Society Circles' announced that she told fortunes and could forecast the future. I wondered why, if this was so, she had not foretold their fate to the 'best society circles' in which she had moved, and warned them of the misfortunes that were to be theirs; but perhaps her clairvoyance had but lately come upon her.

As I walked along the streets, which were filthy with thawing snow, I met a Russian general to whom I had been introduced a few days before. He greeted me with vast smiles, and asked my advice about the best way to carry money abroad. I looked at him in astonishment.

'Ah,' he cried, 'they have appointed me to a post at Prague. I leave in three days. How glad I am to be able to leave this terrible place! But do please tell me what is the best thing to do. You know that it is no use for us Russians to take roubles with us abroad; they are worth so little. And how am I to travel? Do you think that people will be very rude and unhelpful to me if I wear my uniform? I am told that Russians are very unpopular abroad nowadays. They might stop me getting into trains and crossing frontiers and so on. But, you know, I haven't got any clothes except those I am wearing.'

I advised this fortunate person to buy foreign money and to take as many jewels with him as he could lay his hands on, and assured him that his other fears were groundless. He looked surprised

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and delighted, and bounded off happily to his requisitioned room, of which I promptly asked him to give me the reversion.

I went on to call upon an ex-member of the Duma and his wife, whose son I knew well in England. I found them at the top of a high house in the centre of the town. The old gentleman was a professional man and was doing important relief work. I had brought messages and letters from his son, and had to answer hundreds of questions about the latter and the grandchildren. They in turn told me how the outbreak of Bolshevism had caught them in a well-known watering-place in the North Caucasus, and how they had been saved from the fate that befell so many of their friends in this place, where the mob had been particularly murderous, only because their landlady, who was living in the same house, had an intrigue with a Bolshevist Commissar, and the latter wished to spare her the inconveniences associated with a massacre on the premises. The old people would have gone abroad after the Bolshevists had been driven out of the Caucasus, but they had shared the general hopes that the Volunteers would reach Moscow. Now that the rout was becoming evident, it was too late; the old lady was an invalid, and travelling under South Russian conditions was out of the question for her. The one thing that mitigated their misfortune was that an old servant had stuck by them.

The English Christmas arrived—the Volunteer Army still stupidly observed the Old Style calendar, thirteen days behind—and I celebrated it

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with a small dinner-party in our barn. I actually succeeded in obtaining a roast duck from one of the provision shops in the main street, and, with the inevitable sausage, bread, coffee, and vodka, this made a splendid meal. But we could not disguise from ourselves that the situation around Rostov was getting serious. Zaharov had just been given a month's notice by his department—he worked in the official propaganda section, an astoundingly ill-managed show—and had been warned privately to get away from Rostov if he could. He wondered if any of his relatives or other friends would be given a railway carriage at the end; otherwise he saw no possibility of escaping. The railway officials were doing huge business in selling railway tickets, and nobody except profiteers could hope to get away in the normal manner. I had made arrangements to go up to the front, which was somewhere round about Hughesovka (a town named after an old-time Welsh mining engineer), in the company of some British officers; but I had just heard that the journey was abandoned because it was likely that Hughesovka would fall and the front come to Rostov before we could reach the mining town. We knew that the Government had decided to try to 'empty' Rostov and Taganrog to make room for General Wrangel's staff. They were careful to avoid the word 'evacuation'; but the euphemism deceived nobody. The panic had already begun. Every one was losing his head. The wildest rumours were going round; and wise people were thinking only how to escape.

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We talked things over in our barn. It seemed a pity to leave our hard-earned store of coal and the huge vats of spirit in the cupboard; but, much as these two luxuries attracted us, we decided not to delay our departure, but to get away as best we could. We had to scatter our forces. None of us could help the others. Zaharov thought his brother-in-law would probably have a railway coach at his disposal, as he was a railway engineer. Our friend had seemed more than usually unwell recently, but we did not know until afterwards that he had caught smallpox. Ouspiensky thought his connection with the British Economic Mission would be useful for him; he used to make Press summaries for them. I went off to the British railway mission in the main street, told them that I was a correspondent, and asked for a place to Ekaterinodar. They told me I could go that same evening; if I did not want to go at once, they said, it was at my own risk. I realised that Rostov was doomed, and it did not seem a bad idea to get to Ekaterinodar before the final rush, so that I could have time to get a room, do some arrears of work, and be ready for the time when the crowd came down the line. So I said I would go. As it turned out, I was only a few days in advance of the last to leave the town. I had only two hours to prepare for the journey; but I had become accustomed to such surprises, and I had said good-bye to my friends and reached the station in good time.

The panic was increasing hourly. The station was thronged with frightened people, screaming,

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pushing, bribing, fainting. At the time when the train ought to have arrived, there were no signs of it. Hour after hour we waited amid the uproar, in the typhus-stricken station. It was easy for us, who were sure of a place on the train, to be contemptuous of the fear-mad crowds. Their position was unenviable. There were families on the platform who had fled, mile by mile, all the way from Moscow, or even Petrograd, and who saw still another phase of their flight before them. It was not a blind terror that had taken the people; almost without exception, they had had experience of life under the Bolshevists, from whom they were still trying to escape. Most of them were practically destitute, so that the fear of robbery cannot have been strong.

At last the train backed in, and, despite the efforts of the conductors, the waiting crowds fought their way desperately into it. They packed the compartments and the corridors as no trains can ever have been packed before; dozens took up positions on the buffers, and the roofs, too, were soon crowded. But there was no trace of the coach reserved for the British Mission, in which I, too, was to travel. Half a dozen British officers were waiting, with their kit, and there were, perhaps, a dozen soldiers with them. Also, there was a select party of refugees, who had been promised accommodation in the British coach. Now, orders had been given to the Russian Station Commandant to provide one of the coaches apportioned to the British Mission, and this worthy was hunted up by Campbell, the English R.T.O., and

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brought to bay. But it was not for another hour or so that the coach appeared. We did not want to keep the coach waiting, and everybody took a hand to pile in the luggage. I managed to find a trolley, and pulled a trunk upon it. It was top-heavy and tumbled over the end, hitting a Russian officer's leg in its career. I apologised, but the nerves of the officer gave way.

'You're not in England now,' he screamed, waving his arms. 'Remember that you're in Russia now!'

As I looked at the yelling crowd all round, I felt that I should never be likely to forget it. We got on board at last, after a file of Russian soldiers had been cleared out of the carriage, which they had entered from the blind side. They were bitterly annoyed at being expelled. After another hour or two we got under way, having posted an armed guard at each entrance of the coach.

We arrived at Ekaterinodar after a protracted journey, and a couple of British officers and their servant, a crowd of the more hopeful refugees, and myself alighted. The others went on to Novorossisk, wondering whether the Green Guards, who were especially vigilant on that strip of railway, would wreck the train.

A week later Rostov fell,[1] and the mist of Bolshevism lay over it. The curtain lifted, however, for a few hours in February, when the Volunteers re-occupied the city for a day and a half. In that

[1] January 11, 1920. Taganrog had fallen on January 6, and Novocherkask (the seat of the Don Cossack Government) on January 9.

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short respite many people escaped from the town and came down to Ekaterinodar. Besides this, others sent letters. Others, again, managed to cross the Bolshevists' lines during their occupation. Then there were numerous British officers and Russian officers and civilians who left Rostov on the last days before the Bolshevists came in. I used sometimes to meet trainloads of these passing through Ekaterinodar on their way to Novorossisk. From all these sources of information it was easy to put together what had happened in Rostov from the time I left.

The panic had got worse and worse. It became known that the Bolshevists were only a few miles outside Taganrog, Novocherkask, and Rostov. The hooligans became more noticeable, and troops began to get out of hand. Then came the news of the fall of Taganrog. The British Mission there, deserted by the Russian railway authorities, only got their trains away by holding revolvers to the heads of corrupt traffic managers and station-masters. British officers whom I met from Taganrog said that General Holman and some of his staff were absent at the time on a journey intended to put heart into the retreating Russians. The officers left in charge at the Mission called conference after conference, and, finally, had all the Mission stores and files piled upon the station platform. An insufficient guard was put over these, and, in the excitement of getting hold of the three promised but missing trains, these men were rushed by the crowds on the platform. Orders were given to the British soldiers to take

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what they could from the piled stores of cloth, boots, canteen stuff, etc., on the platform, and the rest was abandoned to the mob. As there was no Bolshevist force near, and the mob was unorganised, the whole business seemed inexcusable to my informants. It was certainly a shameful affair.

At Rostov, meanwhile, train after train steamed out, crowded with influential Russians. Regiments ran wild through the streets of the town. Once again the British officers tried to put some heart into the fleeing Volunteers. General Holman suddenly reappeared from the direction of Taganrog. The tale went that he had come down in an aeroplane in a remote spot along the railway line right under the nose of a Bolshevist cavalry patrol. The General got out, unshipped a machine-gun, and put the patrol to flight; after this, he picked up the machine-gun, laid it across his enormous shoulders, and strolled calmly off to safety. At Rostov he went out to one of the roads by which the Bolshevists were advancing, commandeered a tank and took it into action, driving back an advanced force of the enemy. Two other English officers walked through the Bolshevist barrage at the head of the Volunteer regiments to which they were attached, and kept up the shaky *morale* of the men by laughing and joking, until they came to Rostov itself.

But nothing could save the situation. Some of the Russian regiments behaved splendidly, and retired across the Don to their new positions in order. Others simply went to pieces. In the town itself the 'local Bolshevists' brought out

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machine-guns and commenced to raid the cross-roads after dusk. The bare branches of the trees lining the main thoroughfares of the city were used to string up looters and spies. One of these was hanged in the main street by his shirt; when he was caught, nobody could find a rope, so they tore his shirt into shreds, knotted these together, and, looping the line round his neck, strung him up by it, one officer holding his legs for fear he should break the makeshift rope if he dropped too suddenly. A woman spy was caught at the station and summarily strung up outside. Looting commenced at nightfall; all the ragamuffins of the town took part in it. The shops were locked and barred. British officers waiting for their trains at the station risked the barrage that was breaking over the town and the anger of R.T.O. and went out for provisions; but their only means of obtaining anything was to beg it at the back doors of the shops. Thousands of people made their way towards the station. Cossack guards had been placed there to prevent any more people boarding the overcrowded trains, which were only waiting their turn to escape; but the desperate fugitives were climbing up the water-pipes outside the station on to the roof and endeavouring to jump from it to the roofs of the trains.

Ice-breakers were used to smash the ice of the Don to prevent pursuit. A British officer who had been left behind, on the wrong side of the river, escaped from the Bolshevists by crossing the broken ice under heavy fire. The British Railway Mission train was, as usual, one of the last

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to get away, with General Brough sometimes riding on it, sometimes stopping behind. The engine was leaking badly and had to be constantly refilled with water carried up in buckets, work in which all the passengers had to take a hand, as also in sawing up sleepers for fuel. Trains were running south on both the up and down lines; there was a continuous string of them for about ten miles. Naturally, no ordinary safeguards were possible, and accidents were frequent. Even the Railway Mission train, driven by an English driver, collided with the train in front.

Two British officers, Captain Frechville and another, were caught by the Bolshevists near Rostov. For a long time their fate was unknown, though unpleasant rumours came through from Rostov. Two months later I met a young lady at Novorossisk, who had received a letter from her mother, still in Rostov. The letter had been brought out during the Volunteers' short re-occupation of the town. Her father is a well-known resident of Rostov, and the whole family are old friends of Englishmen who have lived in Rostov, one of whom, indeed, took me to see the mother's letter.[1] It was shown to me, and I made a translation on the spot of the part that concerned the missing British officers. The Russian officer referred to in it as 'Baby' is a Russian lieutenant who was acting as their interpreter. Here is the extract :—

[1] I should like to give the name of the family, but, as the parents are now in the Bolshevists' hands, the father being too ill to be moved during the evacuation, I cannot do so. But there can be no doubt of their good faith.

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'... On January 3 [January 16, New Style] I passed two Red Guards going up the stairs of our house; so I locked myself in. They knocked at my door once and then a second time, and a well-known voice said, "I must see you." I opened the door and saw "Baby" before me, accompanied by another Red Guard. He told me that he had been with a British captain named Frechville—I think you have even met him—making fortifications near Sultan-Sali, ten versts from Rostov. On December 26 [January 8, New Style] they were taken prisoner by the Bolshevist cavalry; and, moreover (*pri chěm*), the Englishmen were cut to pieces. "Baby" begged the Bolshevists to kill him quickly, and a Commissar of the 136th Cavalry Regiment named Panichkin, an ex-officer, pointed a rifle at him, but changed his mind, took him prisoner, stripped him of his clothes and whipped him barefoot to Rostov. After some days "Baby" was made a clerk in the Regiment's headquarters, and the Commissar treated him as a "valuable trophy" and made a fuss of him in every possible way, etc.

'"Baby" was terribly depressed; it was awful to look at him. He kept saying that he would escape at the first possible opportunity, but if he could not get away he would kill himself, and he asked me, if I did not hear of him within five months, to let his father know that he was dead. On January 6, the regiment left Rostov, taking "Baby" with them. Before he went I called at their billet in a railwayman's house, and I saw there the Commissar dressed in a British officer's uniform, taken from Captain Frechville. I asked the Commissar where he had got such a uniform, and he replied callously, "I slashed an English officer, and put it on." There's a page from a novel for you. . . .'

The letter was written simply for the eye of the

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young lady to whom it was addressed, and was not intended by the writer to be shown to any one else.[1]

Budyenny's cavalry were the first Bolshevist troops to enter Rostov. The first three days were given up to looting, with the assistance of the 'local Bolshevists.' As all the shops were closed, the looters made their entry through the windows, and soon not a shop in the main streets was left unbroken. The merchants and shopkeepers who still had a supply of goods preferred to sell them through street-hawkers, thinking this a safer method than to exhibit them in their shops. Prices immediately rose, and as the supply of food in the town grew less the price leapt up. On their arrival the Bolshevist political Commissars discovered, to their astonishment, that the average wage of the Rostov workmen was half as high again as the average in Soviet Russia; they promptly issued a decree forbidding any further increase in wages or agitation for that purpose until they should have settled the matter of payment. After a few days an official scale of wages was published,

[1] I showed my translation of this letter to a British Intelligence officer at Novorossisk (who afterwards committed suicide); he sent for the letter and telegraphed the news home. A day or two later I told a Russian journalist friend at Ekaterinodar of the information that had come through, and showed him my copy of the letter; he printed a paragraph in his paper, and the British Mission at Ekaterinodar read it and also telegraphed to England. A question was asked in the House of Commons during the autumn of 1920, and it was then stated that the news of Captain Frechville's death was based on a report in a South Russian newspaper. It will be seen that this was a misunderstanding; I am afraid that the only hope that is left about the death of the two British officers is that 'Baby' may, for some reason or other, have misinformed the lady at Rostov who wrote the letter.

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which fixed the minimum wage at Rs. 2,750 a month, and the maximum at 6,000. This represented a rise—on paper, of course—for the lowest paid class of workmen, but the maximum was far less than the average previously paid to skilled workmen. This appeal to the lowest class of worker was, of course, part of the Bolshevists' policy.

The city grew more and more deathlike. The old tag, that 'Everything the Bolshevists touch dies,' was once more in people's mouths. No one was allowed in the streets after eight o'clock at night. Before their coming, there had been a good tram service, but now there was only one line running, and this only until six in the evening. The electric light was curtailed; so was the telephone service; and the telegraph was reserved for official communications. People who had hoped, and there were many, that the coming of the Bolshevists would open up communications with the rest of Russia, were disappointed. The only communication with Moscow was by wireless. During the couple of months between the arrival of the Bolshevists and the temporary re-occupation of Rostov by the Volunteers, there was no railway connection with even the neighbouring districts. Even Peters, one of the heads of the 'Extraordinary Commission,' had to make part of his journey into the town by motor-car. The Bolshevists had shortly before announced grandiloquently that the death sentence had been abolished in Soviet Russia. On arrival at Rostov, however, they declared that this did not apply to the zone near

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the Front, including Rostov. During the first days of their occupation they searched houses for officers in hiding, and many of these were shot. A certain number of officers, also, were killed in the hospitals. In other hospitals the orderlies refused any longer to look after the wounded officers lying there, and many of these poor wretches died of starvation and neglect. Some people, also, were killed in the streets for 'counter-revolutionary propaganda,' which might mean anything. But at the end of the first week this kind of murdering decreased, and the more refined horrors of the hostage system and the 'Extraordinary Commission' took its place. About four hundred hostages were selected and arrested. Despite all these things, the conduct of the Bolshevists struck the inhabitants of Rostov as noticeably milder than it had been in such towns as Kharkov, Kiev, Odessa, etc.

This period of Bolshevist rule in Rostov—January and February, 1920—presented an amazing muddle of authorities. There were at least half a dozen military and civilian Committees and Soviets, each of which claimed supreme power and issued its decrees regardless of the others. The first Commissar, however, to bring along a company of Red Guards to back up his claim to authority would win. A serious fire that broke out in the main street soon after the Bolshevists' arrival had to burn itself out because one of these conflicting authorities had requisitioned and removed the Fire Brigade's horses. It was noticed that Budyenny's cavalry, elated by its victories,

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were better disciplined than the infantry, which only wanted to be let go home. The fighting officers had few amongst them from the old armies, but were chiefly semi-educated workmen and youths, fed upon Bolshevist propaganda.

The Bolshevist papers published in Rostov gave, as usual, fairly accurate reports of the position at the Front. Needless to say, no other newspapers were allowed to appear. So far as foreign news was concerned, they gave prominence to the trouble in Ireland with the Sinn Feiners, and on the Indian North-West Frontier with the Afghans.

Such was unhappy Rostov under the Bolshevists.

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CHAPTER V

EKATERINODAR: THE RETREAT OF THE VOLUNTEER ARMY

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EKATERINODAR: THE RETREAT OF THE VOLUNTEER ARMY

EKATERINODAR is an old Cossack settlement, founded, as the name shows, by one of the Russian Empresses Katherine. It is a small provincial town, known to most Russians in the old days only as the administrative centre of the Kuban Cossacks' country and as a station on the railway line to Novorossisk. It has suddenly become famous in the course of the anti-Bolshevist campaigns against the Soviet forces. When General Kornilov first led out his army into the Kuban steppe, Ekaterinodar was his chief objective. It was while leading the siege of Ekaterinodar that he was killed by a Bolshevist shell. After this disaster, which was worth the gain of ten thousand ordinary men to the Bolshevists, the Volunteers raised the siege and again took to the steppe. They soon returned, however, and Ekaterinodar became the first capital of anti-Bolshevist Russia. When, in 1919, the great drive upon Moscow began, the seat of the government was moved to Rostov. But now, in the first days of 1920, the fall of Rostov again sent the Volunteers back to Ekaterinodar.

Nothing could be more absurd than the spectacle of this remote little provincial town filling the

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rôle of a Russian capital. It is rather as if Londonderry, say, were to become the temporary capital of the loyal British forces, if the Bolshevists were in occupation of all our big towns. Ekaterinodar is most unsuitable in every way. Its streets are few and long, and almost impassable in the winter for mud, and in the summer from dust. When I came down from Rostov it was, of course, at the height of the mud season. Every night it would freeze, but the morning as regularly would bring a thaw. Consequently the mud was out of all reason. I used to think myself lucky if I was not over my very knees in mud after a walk from my lodgings to the main street and back. The main street was bare and ugly; the shops were poor, and a huge cathedral, as bare as the rest of the place, stood solitary in the great square in the middle of the town. A few trams straggled along the streets, but all other traffic had a hard time to pass over the holes and mud that made the surface of the roads. Imagine this little town suddenly overwhelmed by the arrival of thousands upon thousands of officers, soldiers, and refugees from Rostov and the centre of Russia! It is easy to picture the difference between the local inhabitants and these new-comers. Indeed, one could spend the entr'actes at the theatre by picking out the local inhabitants from amongst the crowd. They seemed so forlorn and so provincial that one felt sorry for them and their lost importance in their own town.

It is well known that the Cossack territories of Russia—the Don country, the Kuban country,

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and the Terek country (so called from their chief rivers)—had, during the Tsarist régime, enjoyed a large measure of self-government under their military chiefs. The Cossacks are a privileged landowning class in the steppes, who paid few or no taxes, but, instead, served a long period of military service, providing their own horses and equipment, and held themselves ready for instant mobilisation in case of trouble. In all the Cossack territories there was an almost equal number of 'Inogorodsy,' *i.e.* 'people from other towns'—outlanders; these were people who had either entered the Cossack country as settlers, or who had actually been in the country when Imperial ukases gave possession of it to the Cossacks. These outlanders bitterly resented the privileges of the Cossacks, and in the conflict of these two parties may be found the explanation of a great deal of the difficulties of the Volunteers in the steppes. After the Russian Revolution of March, 1917, the Cossack countries also took the democratic path. The Cossacks formed 'Councils' and 'Circles' to discuss their affairs, and the outlanders put pressure on them to allow them a share in control. With the coming of the Bolshevists, the outlanders and a few of the younger Cossacks took sides with them against the old and privileged yeomen Cossacks, who had no intention of giving way to the insurgents. The struggle took various forms, but the coming of the Volunteers into the steppe, following an unpleasant experience of Bolshevist rule, soon made the Cossack countries definitely anti-Bolshevist. But there was

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always jealousy between the Cossacks and the Volunteers, who despised one another. The Cossacks were looked upon by the officers from the north of Russia as boors and conceited peasants, and retorted by calling the Volunteers puppies and town elegants.[1]

The self-importance of the Kuban Cossacks grew as a consequence of the dependence of the anti-Bolshevist forces upon them for food and men. In December, 1918, as soon as the Bolshevists were first driven out of the Kuban, the Kuban Council, the 'Rada,' allured by the charms of high politics, sent a deputation to the Paris Peace Conference to set out the position and claims of the Kuban. This deputation was instructed to report to M. Sazonov, the head of the Russian delegation in Paris; but actually it avoided him and put itself in contact with the representatives of the small border countries of Russia, such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the others, and, excited by their example, it began to demand recognition for the Kuban as a separate and independent State! Nothing could have been more ludicrous. No inhabitant of Ekaterinodar, or the two or three other little Kuban towns, and no peasant—Cossack or non-Cossack—of the steppes, but would have

[1] The quarrel did not often come to the surface, but, when it did, there was excitement in the air. At a conference of Volunteers and Cossacks in January, 1920, a Cossack delegate, who had lunched too well, shouted out that the only Russians worth considering were the Cossacks; the rest were muck! Challenges flew round the room, and quiet was only restored by the apology and withdrawal of the offender and the taking of an oath by all concerned not to divulge what had happened. However, one of those present told a friend in strict confidence, and plenty of people soon came to hear of it.

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been incredulous if it had been suggested to him that he was not a Russian but an inhabitant of an independent Kuban Republic. The Peace Conference was equally unimpressed. However, the delegation was not to be put off by the indifference of Paris to its appeals. It succeeded in getting an interview with President Wilson; and in June, 1919, it contracted its first international alliance. This, characteristically, was with another mysterious group of people who called themselves the representatives of the 'Republic of Mountain Peoples,' and claimed to represent the tribes of Daghestan and the Caucasus Mountains. This 'Mountain Republic' was largely an attempt of the Georgians to form a buffer State between Georgia and Russia. It found kindred spirits in the Kuban delegation, for ambition and German and Georgian backing were the things common to both parties. The agreement between the two delegations bound both 'States' to respect each other's independence and integrity, and in effect withdrew assistance from the anti-Bolshevist forces in the interests of a neutrality so becoming to young nations. The Kuban delegation had, of course, no authority from the Rada or from the country to conclude such agreements; but November, 1919, came before the Rada definitely abandoned the field opened to the ambitions of its politicians by renouncing the treaty and dismissing the delegation. In the intervening period the Rada had endeavoured to separate the Kuban from the rest of Russia by the establishment of customs-houses all round its borders, which threw

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the country into confusion, and was one of the chief causes of the disorganisation of Denikin's communications, and thus of his defeat. Simultaneously with the Rada's re-assertion of the Kuban's unity with Russia, General Denikin, acting in conjunction with the elected Kuban Ataman and other loyal Kuban elements, ordered the trial by court-martial of the four members of the Kuban delegation who had been chiefly responsible for the attempt to break away. Three of these escaped, one to Tiflis. But the fourth, one Kulabuhov, was arrested, tried, and hanged in the public square in front of the Cathedral in Ekaterinodar, with a placard on his breast naming him a traitor to Russia. The other members of the Rada who were in favour of separation were arrested and banished from Russia. Thus the separatist adventure was liquidated. The execution of Kulabuhov offended the Kuban Cossacks as an unnecessarily severe measure, and, still more, because the execution had been carried out under the control of officers, with General Wrangel at their head, who were mostly not drawn from the Cossacks. As Cossacks, they wanted to hang their traitors themselves! Even the Kuban Ataman, General Ouspiensky (no relation of my friend), in the course of a proclamation attacking the separatists, said that he was 'deeply offended that the members of the Kuban delegation and the members of the Kuban Rada were not tried by the new Kuban Rada or by the courts established by the Rada.' Owing to Cossack feeling, General Wrangel, undoubtedly the best general

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in the Volunteer Army, was sent to another front.

In the early days of the Volunteer Army, it was the Kuban Cossacks who saved the situation, and the Don Cossacks who faltered. But now, in the winter of 1919-1920, it was the other way about. The Don Cossacks were fighting like Trojans round Rostov and Novocherkask, their chief towns; but the Kuban Cossacks were becoming more and more unreliable. This was due largely to the tactics of the Kuban political leaders, whose inexperience was still being played upon by influential German and other agents. The average Kuban Cossack, it is true, was in a quandary, what to do if the Bolshevists commenced to invade the Kuban country If he stayed at home on his own land, the Bolshevists would have a clear march through, for the Don Cossacks and the remnants of the Volunteers from Central Russia were insufficient to guard the whole front. If, on the other hand he rode out against the Bolshevists, the outlanders at home would try to jump his land, the Cossacks' almost exclusive control of which they so much resented. Then, again, when the Bolshevists had occupied the Kuban regions, a certain number of young Cossacks had joined them. With the Bolshevists' defeat, these had had to retire with them, and their only chance of returning home lay in a Bolshevist re-occupation of the Kuban. Thus, the keenest troops in the Bolshevist ranks were Kuban men. This muddle still further confused the unsettled purpose of the Kuban Cossacks.

The situation, then, when General Denikin's

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capital was moved from Rostov to Ekaterinodar was very difficult. Ekaterinodar was hopelessly overcrowded. It was fortunate for me that I had come down in good time to get a room. I was able to get excellent quarters in the house of a rich Greek tobacco merchant, who was anxious to have his room requisitioned by an Englishman, since, otherwise, a Russian officer or two would have been certain to take it, and, with the Russian Christmas and New Year celebrations coming on, the presence of Russian officers in a quiet household was a thing to be avoided, since it was possible that they might celebrate the occasion boisterously. My neighbour in the house was a Jewish speculator, who appeared to be familiar with every one of importance in the town, and from whom, in consequence, I got a great deal of useful information and the opportunity of meeting many interesting people. The rush for rooms soon became extraordinary. It had been intended to transfer the entire Denikin government to Ekaterinodar, and their billeting officers asked for no less than 8,000 rooms for the staff. The Don Government (*i.e.* the local government of the Don region,) who had been driven out of Novocherkask by the Bolshevists, also desired to be housed in Ekaterinodar. There was, of course, the Kuban local administration also. And the foreign military missions wanted accommodation, and so did thousands of refugees, merchants, wounded and convalescent officers, and so on. Needless to say, there was not accommodation in Ekaterinodar for a tenth of the people who wanted to be there.

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The authorities carried out the strictest requisitioning of rooms and houses. Families were turned out into the streets to make room for new-comers. The various billeting officers quarrelled for the vacated premises. A friend of mine, editor of the chief paper in Ekaterinodar, had to spend half his time in saving his family from being turned out of their flat. The rest of his time was spent at his office or in sardonically watching the attempts of the Volunteer Army secret service department to get possession of certain school premises (in the same building as his flat) which the Ministry of Posts had secured and which the Don Government also imagined they had the reversion of. It was an uninspiring sight. But certainly all the officials who came down to Ekaterinodar from Taganrog and Rostov had to spend most of their time in trying to get quarters for themselves and their families; consequently they had little time to give to their real duties. I think it may fairly be said that, after the fall of Rostov, the Volunteer administration practically ceased to exist.

In every house and flat in the town rooms were being requisitioned regardless of the needs of the owners, who used every form of influence they could to save themselves from being thrown out into the street, where—crowning injury!—they might not even take their furniture with them; but they had to leave it for the official new-comers. At the billeting headquarters in a disused shop in the main street crowds of indignant house-owners and their friends might be seen at all hours of the day, protesting against the requisitioning

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of their apartments, while another crowd, equally large and nearly as noisy, was composed of officers and officials and their wives who had arrived in the town and had nowhere at all to sleep. As always happened in such cases, the noisiest and most plausible pleaders were often the least sufferers; half the conversation in Ekaterinodar was about the faults of the billeting authorities. For the rest, of course, we talked about prices and the rate of exchange of roubles into foreign money, and discussed rumours.

At last it was decided that only a part of the government should be transferred to Ekaterinodar; the rest were to go to Novorossisk, which was just as overcrowded as Ekaterinodar, or to be scattered over the steppe in the Cossack villages. For one moment it was even proposed officially that the people working in the offices should be housed in the towns, and their families dispersed over the steppe. This plan caused consternation, and for a very good reason. If in Russia nowadays you lose sight of a person, even if you intend to be absent for only a few hours, you may very likely never see him again. I knew innumerable cases of this kind. A father would run up to Rostov from Novorossisk (that is, if he was able to bribe a ticket out of the officials), merely a few hours' journey in normal times, to try to get a sight of his son, an officer in the Volunteer Army. His son is suddenly despatched up country; the father arrives, cannot find him, and, moreover, is unable to get away from Rostov again, because the panic has commenced. The Bolshevists occupy the

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town, and the father has to remain. Nobody knows whether he is alive or dead, or where the son is. His wife, at Novorossisk, who expected him back in a couple of days, has no means on which to live. And so the terrible business goes on day after day. When any one in Russia left a town in the days that I am describing, no matter how short a time he intended to be away, he said farewell to his friends, with the knowledge that a thousand accidents might prevent his ever meeting them again. The hundred miles or so between Rostov and Ekaterinodar and between Ekaterinodar and Novorossisk were almost insuperable barriers.

What decision was at last come to about the housing of the ministries and their officials and families, I really do not know. The confusion was too great for any settled plan to be put into operation. What saved things a little was the sudden thawing of the Don river and steppe, which held up the Bolshevists' advance for several weeks. Denikin's headquarters were first at Bataisk, quite close to Rostov, and then, slowly, he was driven back along the railway to Tihoretsky. The retaking of Rostov by the Volunteers in February raised hopes, but this proved to be only a trap, in which a large part of Denikin's forces were outflanked and lost. Meanwhile, life in Ekaterinodar pursued its tempestuous course.

If in Rostov the Russians had lived from day to day, in Ekaterinodar they lived from hour to hour and from minute to minute. There was no reliable news; only rumours. One day we would

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hear that Taganrog had been retaken by the Whites, and that the Reds were in full retreat upon Kharkov; the next report would be that General Denikin and his staff had been cut off at Tihoretskaya by Budyenny's cavalry and massacred. We never knew what was true or false.

Of the new friends I made in Ekaterinodar, there were two in particular whose courage and endurance in these trying circumstances, unpleasant enough for me, but ten thousand times worse for them, made me respect them as greatly as I liked them. Both men came originally from Petrograd. One was a journalist and the other a lawyer. The former was a Jew and the son of a prominent Zionist. His name was Morshak. The other was a young man, named Tumanov.[1] Morshak was helping to edit the *Utro Yuga* (*i.e. Morning of the South*), the only independent paper in Ekaterinodar. In his spare time he was translating Blake's poems from the English. He knew English well, and had lived in London as a correspondent for a couple of years. His wife was a charming woman, who was bearing up bravely against the difficulties of life in that God-forsaken town; and they had a child of two or three, who will never know how much his parents suffered in those days, largely on his account. The Tumanovs had had a little son a year or two before, but the child had died on a journey, through the brutality of a crowd of people who were fighting for a train. It was

[1] This is not his real name, but, until I know that he is safely out of Russia, I do not wish to mention it.

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terrible to learn how many children had died in those terrible days. The Morshaks, too, had lost one; and in most of the families I met, some such tragedy had taken place in the last three years. Russia is no place for children during a civil war; one saw few of them in the south.

I had an introduction to Morshak, and, calling on him as soon as I arrived in Ekaterinodar, I used to spend an hour or two there every day. One of Morshak's specialities was the writing of satirical topical verse. Shortly before I came to Ekaterinodar, a local Bolshevist, annoyed by something Morshak had written about him, called at the newspaper office with a revolver and, shooting at Morshak, had wounded another member of the staff. He had been put into prison for this offence, but he announced that, as soon as the Bolshevists came and released him, he would settle Morshak's affair without fail. But the latter had no chance to escape from Ekaterinodar, because, as a Jew, he could not obtain any assistance from the authorities to take his family with him. He refused to desert them, and, although his wife begged him to escape and leave her, he remained to the end. I was glad to hear, a few days before Ekaterinodar finally fell, that the hostile Bolshevist had become so ill that his life was despaired of by his friends. I hope that he died and left Morshak in peace.

The Tumanovs I met in the following manner. I had commandeered another room, by request of the owner, in a school, where I hoped to place any friend of mine who might come along in the

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next day or so and be in need of one. Chiefly I had Ouspiensky in mind. Calling there one evening on my way back from Morshak's flat, I was met at the door with an angry 'What do you want?' I turned on my pocket torch, and saw a man sleeping on the table that constituted the furniture of the room. I was about to expostulate when a woman's head rose from the bundle of coats under which he was sleeping. I hastily withdrew, and returned first thing in the morning. Then Tumanov introduced himself and his wife, asked me to excuse their occupying my room, but explained that they had nowhere else to go, and the porter had taken pity on them and invited them in. I said I was only too pleased for them to occupy it, but asked them to move, in the event of Ouspiensky's arriving. This they promised to do, and we all three went out to lunch. Tumanov knew some friends of mine in Petrograd, and soon began to tell me his experiences in the last three years. He had been badly wounded on the German front, and had come to the south. The first Bolshevist triumph caught him at Odessa, when he was nearly well again. He detested the Bolshevists, but he saw no reason why he should not do his best to serve Russia in his own way, and he had become a member of a court to investigate Commissars' embezzlements and similar crimes. He soon became president of the court, and distinguished himself by his keenness and aptitude. One fine day he was arrested as a 'counter-revolutionary' by a Jewish commissar, sent to prison in charge of two Jewish Red Guards, handed

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over to a Jewish jailer, and dumped into a cell—with three or four Jewish prisoners. He never learned why he was accused of counter-revolutionary propaganda, except that an expansive commissar told him one day in prison that 'You wouldn't have put so much energy into your work unless you had expected the Whites to come into Odessa and take over your court from you!' He contrived to escape, and went to hide in a hut on the sea-shore a few miles out of Odessa. The Bolshevists were driven out, and he joined the Volunteer forces. Too ill to fight, he had used his expert knowledge of military law in legal posts at the rear. To his disgust, he was one day appointed to the secret service, piquant details of the failings of which he gave me. According to him, the Volunteer Army secret service was honeycombed with German agents, who sought in every way to hinder the work of General Denikin. He declared that there was a pro-German nucleus in every Volunteer regiment and chancellory, which sought an opportunity to join up with similar groups in the Bolshevist ranks. It was possible, he said, that in a short time we might see all the pro-German generals, Bolshevist and anti-Bolshevist, join up in a single body, opposed both to the reigning Bolshevists and to General Denikin, but friendly disposed towards the Germans. He told me, also, of one of the worst mistakes that had been made by the Volunteer Army. At first, the Bolshevist officers and men used to desert to them in thousands. But, suddenly, a general commanding at the front

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arrested three or four officers who had come over and sentenced them to death as traitors to Russia. One pleaded that he had been unable to escape service in the Soviet armies, and that, far from having helped his side, he had done his best to spoil their designs; more than once he had succeeded in arranging a battle between two Soviet detachments. His pleas were in vain, and he was shot on the spot. The second officer, seeing that this excuse had been useless, adopted a cynical air, and said that he did not care whom he served; he warned his accusers that if they shot him they would lose a skilled officer. He, too, was shot. So were the others. The result was that since that day not a single officer had deserted from the Red Armies to the Volunteers. Among the officers who had been shot was said to be Brussilov, the son of the Bolshevist commander, who was an old Tsarist general. Tumanov was sick of the incompetence and treachery of his colleagues in the secret service. Most of those who were not pro-Germans, he said, seemed to him to be Bolshevist spies. I do not know how far he was right in what he said.

A few days after I arrived in Ekaterinodar, General Ouspiensky, the Kuban Ataman, died of typhus, contracted in his train on the way down from Rostov. One saw dozens of funerals every day from this disease; but the Ataman's funeral was a very dignified affair. The procession stretched the whole length of the main street, and one saw there many local celebrities, like General Shkuro, the Kuban guerilla hero, with his

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little body, emaciated with dissipation and disease, leaning on a stick. As at all Russian military funerals, there were men carrying crosses at the head of the procession, followed at some distance by the white hearse with a tall white canopy, drawn by white horses, swathed in white, and white-coated attendants. Behind the hearse were the dead Ataman's relatives, many friends and official mourners, and a few companies of Kuban Cossacks, in the smartest and most complete new British uniforms.

Life in Ekaterinodar was nerve-racking, without being definitely exciting or dangerous. Every night a few rifles and revolvers would go off and one would hear next morning of a hold-up in the town. I did not like to walk too far from the main streets at night. There were some ghastly men on the road to the station, who used to stop passers-by and beg; they were soldiers who had had typhus, and who were a little mad in consequence. Their faces, indeed their whole bodies, were so thin as to seem almost transparent, and their eyes shone feverishly at you as they stretched out their claw-like hands. They looked as if they would stick at nothing, had they but the physical strength; one felt appalled at the sight of them, and evaded their touch as if they had been lepers. But, then, everything was calculated to try one's nerves—the constant uncertainty, the alarms, false and real, the overcrowding of the streets of the pestilential little town, the spectacle of demoralisation and misery.

Suddenly, a Moscow Art Theatre company

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arrived, and for about a month the theatre was packed to see their performances. The whole audience dissolved into tears at these plays, which to them were more pathetic, from their changed conditions, than any tragedy could have been. In one scene of Chehov's *Uncle Vanya* a revolver is fired in the wings. One night, when I was in the theatre and this occurred, a girl sitting near me collapsed and had to be carried outside screaming. I learnt that her lover had been shot before her eyes by the Bolshevists some months before.

One was not certain, however, of seeing the Art Theatre in the evenings, because the electric light of Ekaterinodar was so uncertain in its behaviour that, as often as not, the show had to be abandoned because the supply had failed. There was an angry correspondence in the local Press about whether the lighting officials were doing this to force the Art Theatre people to bribe them. It was, of course, denied by all concerned; but I think it was true.

The astonishing presence of the Moscow Art Theatre was due to the fact that, anxious to escape from Bolshevist Russia, they had contrived during the autumn to be performing in one of the towns that were likely to be occupied by the advancing Volunteers. As soon as the Whites entered, they came down to the south. The Bolshevists promptly declared them outlaws and threatened reprisals on the rest of the Art Theatre company who were still performing in Moscow. Nothing worse happened, however, to these innocent hostages than the temporary closure of their

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theatre, so far as could be learned. But the company at Ekaterinodar was nervous of their own fate if they should fall once more into the Bolsheviks' hands. Among them was Mme Knipper, the widow of Chehov, who played the rôles of the heroine in his plays *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Garden*. Other well-known members of the company were MM. Kochalov and Berseniev. They told me that they hoped to go to Prague, where they had once appeared in pre-War days, and from there to Paris and London. But they were afraid that they would not be successful in these western towns. Mme Knipper, who once spent a few days in London, paid some compliments to the usually maligned English climate; she assured me, by the way, that though her late husband had never desired the translation of his works, he had recognised that English was the best foreign medium for his effects.

'What nerves one needs,' one of the company said to me, 'to go on playing in these times!' Some of them rallied me on the existence of pro-Bolshevist apologists in England. How could it be, they asked, that people in England were ignorant of the real happenings in Bolshevist Russia? If England knew, they said, what the Bolsheviks were really like, they would never write nonsense about their high ideals, their popularity, and so on.

'Very well,' I said at last, 'write and sign a protest; and I will forward it to England. You are well known there, and people will take notice of what you say.'

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At first they jumped at the idea. But then somebody reminded them of their colleagues who were still in the Bolshevists' hands. Then they confessed that they dared not write or sign a protest against the Bolsheviks.

The repertoire of the Art Theatre at Ekaterinodar included Chehov's *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Garden* ('Why do they call it the "Cherry Orchard" in England?' Mme Chehov asked me); Turgeniev's *A Month in the Country*; *The Brothers Karamazov*, adapted from Dostoevsky's novel; and Knut Hamsun's *At the Emperor's Gates*.

Life was really difficult. One day a lady whom I had met at a friend's flat called on me in great excitement. She was a doctor and had just been informed that she was to be mobilised and sent to a remote village in the steppe to look after an improvised typhus hospital. She did not mind the work or the terrible conditions in which she would have to perform it; but she was appalled at having to leave her home, to which under the existing conditions she might never be able to return. What would her children do in her absence, she asked. She wanted me to intercede for her through the British Mission; but, as this was beyond my power, I had to leave her in her trouble.

After some weeks in the mud and misery of Ekaterinodar, I decided to go down to Novorossisk As much as anything I wanted a change of food. All that Ekaterinodar's shops could provide me with—the restaurants were too bad for words—seemed to be smoked duck and roast turkey.

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There was no relief from this food. The Kuban people regard vegetables, so they informed me, as fit only for pigs; and never did I succeed in buying anything better than rich pickled cabbage. After a few weeks of uninterrupted turkey, duck and oily white cabbage, I began to see turkeys and ducks and cabbage perpetually before me. They went to bed with me, and the first thing on waking I saw them floating mistily upon the ceiling. I hated the sight and the taste of them with a deep hatred.

I had arranged to travel down with three soldiers of the English Mission who were being sent away on sick leave. We arrived at the station at Ekaterinodar at nine o'clock in the evening, and began to look for the coach that had been promised. It was to be a 'teplushka,' that is, a cattle-truck with a stove in it; ordinary carriages were no longer obtainable. It was ordered at three in the afternoon to be ready at eight, as the train was due to leave at midnight. A telephone message at nine showed that the Russian official charged with providing it had not troubled to hand on the instructions to the depot. But we were promised that it would be ready at midnight. The Russian station commandant gave orders over the telephone that a stove was to be provided, and that the truck was to be properly cleaned. All this the depot faithfully promised to do, and at eleven o'clock we were informed, or rather the Russian Commandant was, that all this had been done, and a supply of coal put inside the truck. But I was not even faintly surprised

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when, on the arrival of the truck at about three in the morning, it was seen that no stove whatever had been provided, and no fuel, and that no trouble had been taken to clean the truck after its last freight of horses. We were offered a place in one of the second-class carriages on the train, and the Commandant set about turning some unhappy passengers out of their places to make room for us. But after one glance inside the carriage, we unanimously decided to travel down in the truck. The carriage was full of people, jumbled together; the stench was horrible, and in a country full of louse-carried typhus it seemed almost certain that we should be infected before our journey's end. So we had the truck swept out, and got inside. There were the three English sergeants and myself, a Belgian gentleman, who had been in Ekaterinodar on business, and his wife, two Russian motor-drivers, an interpreter attached to the British Mission, and one or two other people. At the last moment a Russian General came up and asked if we should object to the company of himself, and his wife and child; we invited him in, whereupon he arrived with his wife, three children, two old women servants, a dog, and several huge rolls of beddings and mattresses. However, we all crowded in.

Before the train left, I went out to have a talk with an amiable luggage-porter of my acquaintance. I found him with a crowd of his friends. One of them was saying, 'I tell you, miracles do happen; and there are prophets about. Why, only three days ago, there were three stars visible

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in the sky at midday. No, I didn't see them myself; I wasn't looking; but you ask the wife of Ivan Mitrofanovich—*she* saw them! I tell you there are prophets about, but we can't see them.'

My friend was sceptical and said so; half the porters sided with him and half with the other man. As I had to rejoin the train, I do not know who convinced whom at last.

After a bitterly cold journey over the mountains we arrived next day at Novorossisk. Things were as bad there as they were up country. All the banks except one were closed—a sure sign of panic—and even this one was chiefly occupied, it seemed to me, in buying and selling foreign money. The reason was that every one who could was trying to get away from Russia, and, as the steamship companies refused to accept roubles in payment, there was a great demand for English, French, Italian and other moneys. You could at that time get the sum of six thousand roubles for an English pound note, whereas for a cheque, admittedly a sound one, the offers never exceeded three thousand. Outside the agency for the Italian line of steamers to Constantinople and Taranto there was a struggling crowd of people, all hoping to get away. What must the feelings have been of those Russians who knew themselves doomed if the Bolsheviks should come, who had no hope of anything else happening, who saw the foreign shipping in the harbour, and yet for one reason or another—the call of duty or the lack of money—had no chance to get aboard? I saw

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some of them standing on the quay, and it was a sad sight. Others more fortunate lined the sides of the ships about to leave, gazing their last upon Russia, the land of suffering.

The panic was not yet very serious when I arrived at Novorossisk. While I was there I interviewed Mr Mackinder, the High Commissioner, who had at last arrived. He was staying at the White House, a big building near the British Mission. I called there one afternoon, and asked for an interview. A secretary appeared in what, after the sights in the Russian streets, seemed to me to be really beautiful clothes, and assured me in shocked tones that Mr Mackinder could not possibly see any one so early in the day. I bowed down and departed, feeling very small. I called again in the evening after dinner. The secretary threw up his hands when he saw me, and asked if I really thought Mr Mackinder would see me at that hour. I suggested that there seemed few hours when Mr Mackinder could see me; and the secretary went off to inquire. He soon came back with the intelligence that Mr Mackinder would receive me. The news seemed to make a deep impression on him, and I am sure he felt that it was all very wrong and undepartmental.

Mr Mackinder was affable. He had just returned from a journey up to Ekaterinodar, where he had met General Denikin and other leaders of the anti-Bolshevist forces, in the company of the heads of the British Mission. He impressed upon me that General Wrangel had personally assured

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him that same day that there was no truth in the rumour that he was seeking to oust General Denikin from his position as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of South Russia. General Wrangel had declared, on the contrary, that he intended to give General Denikin all possible support; his differences with the latter were on questions of tactics, but his loyalty would be absolute. I rather wondered why Mr Mackinder went off on this tack, but he had probably some reason to consider it of importance, for he continued for some time in the same vein. He said he hoped that General Wrangel's definite statement would dispose of the wild suggestions of certain sections of the younger Russian officers who had hoped to make General Wrangel the hero of a new development of policy with a pro-German orientation. General Wrangel, he said, had assured him on his word of honour that he was not a pro-German.

I asked Mr Mackinder what he thought of the military position. He pretended to be optimistic. He remarked upon the recent successes of the Don army against the Bolshevist advance guards, and claimed that the change in the weather, which had melted the Don and turned the steppe into mud, would be all to the advantage of the Volunteers, to whom it gave an interval for recuperation and the chance to restore *morale* and train fresh levies. He added that he thought the Kuban Cossacks would now fight firmly, and that the advance of the Bolshevists would be arrested. 'Novorossisk,' he said, 'is one of the safest towns in all Russia

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to-day.' After these illuminating and strikingly unprophetic words, Mr Mackinder said he was starting for home next day to report, but he added that he 'hoped' to return to Russia soon.

It was nice to meet a politician again.

A few days later I went off to Constantinople, where I wanted to do some arrears of work, for which conditions in South Russia were everywhere unfavourable. I stayed in Constantinople for two or three weeks and then returned to Novorossisk.

A Russian officer whom I met on the boat going back put before me what I think was a fair presentation of the case for the Volunteer Army against its detractors abroad. 'I should like to put a question,' he said, 'to the people who judge the Volunteer Army by its present failure and regard it in consequence as a despicable adventure. What would they have had loyal Russians do in 1918 when the Bolshevist government, deserting the cause of the Allies, concluded a humiliating peace with Germany? Surely you will not blame us for continuing the struggle by your side. Every Englishman faced with the same circumstances, unless he was in political agreement with the Bolsheviks, would have done what Kornilov's volunteers did—he would have rallied to the flag of his country against her foes within and without. Certainly after the defeat of Germany on the Western Front—an event, it should be remembered, neither expected nor desired by the Bolsheviks, who thought the War would end in a "draw," with the complete exhaustion of both sides and the consequent triumph of Bolshevism—

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and the withdrawal of enemy troops from Russia a new problem was before patriotic Russians. There were two courses open to us. First, we could continue the struggle initiated by Alexeiev and Kornilov and work openly for the overthrow of the Soviet power and the reconstruction of Russia; alternatively we could pretend to reconcile ourselves with the Bolsheviks and enter the Bolshevik machine with the intention of absorbing it and ultimately throwing off the Bolshevik heads and converting their régime into a genuine Russian state organisation. Some of us did the first thing; others the second. It depended largely on which part of Russia we happened to be in. Those of us who were in the South, men of all parties—Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals, and Socialists—joined up with Denikin. Those who were in Soviet Russia entered the Soviet machine, some willingly, others, the majority, compelled by hunger and threats of violence. I do not think there can be much doubt which was the nobler course of the two.

'The men who joined the Volunteers had their aims set clearly before them; the others were and still are pursuing a tortuous policy, hoping with real Russian fatalism that all will come right in the end, and that the Bolsheviks will at last be overthrown by their own machine. I hope this will, indeed, come about. It certainly now seems probable that the fatalists are justified and that their policy will succeed where our more open methods have failed. But I insist that this alternative was not before us when the Volunteer Army

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came into existence. We Volunteers looked upon ourselves as the successors of the Russian nation that for three years had fought by the side of the Allies and had suffered even more than they in the fight. It is hypocritical to judge us only by our present misfortunes. Think what would have been said of us by the same people who now revile us as adventurers and reactionaries if we had succeeded in driving out the Bolshevists, as we very nearly did do three or four months ago.'

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CHAPTER VI

THE GREEN GUARDS

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CHAPTER VI

THE GREEN GUARDS

WHEN one hears that it was the 'disorganisation in Denikin's rear' that caused his defeat, it is necessary to remember that it was 'Green Guards' who chiefly caused it. The civil population in the country occupied by Denikin's army, if it did not, after the first burst of enthusiasm, show much zeal on his behalf, at least—with the exception of certain sections of the workmen in the big towns—preferred him to the Bolshevists. Thus, while it is true that Denikin's rear was disorganised, and that this, together with Budyenny's outflanking movement, was one main cause of his defeat, it was the Green Guards (and, partly, the Kuban separatists), deliberately organised and incited by his enemies, who were responsible for this, and not the civil population as such.

Returning to Novorossisk, I found that the situation in this, as in every other respect, had changed considerably for the worse. We were now at the end of February, 1920. The Bolshevist pressure on the front was increasing and the Volunteer armies were gradually crumbling. General Denikin and his Staff, and the advanced section of the British Mission, under Generals Holman and Brough, were now far down the line,

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and it was anticipated that the imminent fall of Tihoretskaya would be followed by an insurrection at Ekaterinodar, the Kuban capital, and the final break-up of the Volunteers. And yet, paradoxical as it may seem, there were many people who still hoped for good news. Their argument, which was justified by all the information obtainable, was that, bad as the *morale* and conditions of the Volunteers were, the Bolshevist army's plight was little better, if at all. One decisive blow might crumble up the Bolshevists and throw them back helter-skelter upon Kharkov. I could have accepted this argument had the Volunteers' organisation in the rear been even a little better than it was. But, from what I could see of their railways and the rest of their services, the anti-Bolshevist forces were as little equipped to follow up a victory as to support a defeat. The railways, which were the vital element, were worse conducted than ever. A railway journey was now an ordeal, and a dangerous one, for the Green Guards were a greater menace than the Red Guards.

The end of 1919 saw the rise of the 'Green Guards' in these parts from sporadic peasant bands into a real anti-Volunteer force. It had taken everybody a long time to realise that they were a serious danger, but now I judged, from the conversations I heard and the space that the local Press was devoting to them, that they were coming into their own at last.

They were known to consist of several heterogeneous classes. Some were simply peasants

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fleeing from the general mobilisation ordered by both parties in the Civil War; others were criminals and men who had been driven from their villages by their fellows; others, again, were adventurous youths, who were in some cases under the impression that they were on the way to creating a new provincial or national power; many were Bolshevists who had remained behind after the Bolshevist armies had been driven out of these parts; and some were Bolshevist agents who had been sent from Soviet Russia to organise trouble in Denikin's rear. Their ostensible leaders were, in most cases, men who had succeeded in imposing their authority on the others by force of will; in many sections of the Green Guards, they were Russian Army ex-officers, who, for some reason or another, preferred this outlaw service to the more regular forces in the country.

At Sochi, for example, a Black Sea port about 90 miles south-west of Novorossisk, the Green commanders were an ex-colonel named Voronovich and a certain Filipovsky, who had started his career as a naval lieutenant. He was, I learned, a cousin of my wife, and his friends had always used to admire him for his liberal patriotism. What his motives were in leading a Green band, no one can tell. Probably he had some distorted idea of leading a peasant revolution to re-establish his country.[1] Their staff consisted of officer deserters like themselves. They worked on the model of a regular Army staff, on primitive lines,

[1] Every Russian to-day imagines himself a potential Napoleon.

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it is true; and they even used field telephones to communicate with their outposts.

These people at Sochi were one of the centres of the Green Guards; the other centre being Ekaterinodar. When the Greens first appeared on the Russian scene after the Revolution in 1917, they had no central organisations, but in recent months it had become apparent that they were no longer bands of brigands, wandering and marauding without plan. They were now for the most part distributed in groups of sixty or seventy, armed with rifles and machine-guns, and in some cases even with artillery. They obtained inspiration and materials from certain sources known to them alone, and terrorised the villages in their respective spheres of operation into feeding and housing them. When they had any remarkable success, such, for example, as the temporary occupation of a town, the peasants of the neighbourhood hastened in with carts to share in the loot. Robin Hoods of a sort, they were not unpopular with the peasants, whom they served to isolate from the requisitions of Volunteer and Bolshevik alike.

They now occupied practically the whole of the Black Sea coast from Sochi northwards to the Sea of Azov, except for Novorossisk itself, and there their line had a break of a score of miles or so. Yet Novorossisk lived in hourly expectation of the raids, and the searchlights of a British man-of-war in the harbour played nightly on the hills to keep them at a distance from the Mission headquarters on shore.

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The highest point of development that the Green Guards had yet reached was, however, in the Ukraine,[1] under a clever peasant named Makhno. I heard an account of how he captured Ekaterinoslav, a big town on the Dnieper with a large Jewish population.

In the middle of September, 1919, it appears, news came to Ekaterinoslav that numerous bands of Green Guards had managed to make their way through the Volunteer Army's lines, with the aid of Petloura and the Bolshevists, and were attempting to enter the city. The Volunteer Governor, of course, denied these rumours, and declared that there was not the least occasion for alarm. However, the reports of the approach of the bandits grew more and more persistent; they were known to have occupied neighbouring towns. The authorities declared the town under martial law; timid inhabitants left the suburbs and concentrated in the centre of the city, and were careful not to go out in the evening, for fear of being robbed in the streets. On October 26th Makhno's men made

[1] I do not wish to enter here into a discussion of the so-called Ukrainian question, but I think it as well to suggest that, as every Ukrainian peasant is of the opinion that he is a Russian, and as, moreover, proclamations posted 'in the Ukrainian language' (a mixture of Russian and Polish) by the Ukrainian nationalist Government in 1917-18 had to be translated into Russian before the ordinary Ukrainian could grasp their meaning, the separatist venture is not likely to survive the re-establishment of Russia, whenever this takes place. Now that Austria is no longer in a position to run separatist propaganda in the Ukraine, the position of their *protégés* is till more precarious. Any one desiring further opinions on this point may, perhaps, turn to an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* on November 14, 1918; M. Maillord's *Le Mensonge de l'Ukraine Séparatiste* (Paris: Berger-Levrault); and my *Russia at the Crossroads*, ch. 2.

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an attempt to capture the city, but were beaten off by a hastily formed militia. Four days later, a large body of peasants came into the town, ostensibly to buy provisions; arrived at the market-place, they pulled out their weapons and joined with their fellows who had surrounded the town. A panic seized the inhabitants; the Governor hurried away in a special train; and, after the militiamen had put up the best fight they could against superior numbers, darkness came on, and the bandits were masters of the town. The city was given over to murder and looting. For example, a whole family, including two children of ten and thirteen years, was massacred because a pair of Army spurs was found in their flat, which the Green Guards imagined to belong to a Volunteer officer. The prisons were opened, and the usual results ensued. It was exactly like the old Bolshevist occupation, even to the reintroduction of the hated title of *tovarishch* ('comrade') by the self-appointed rulers of the town. The local paper was suppressed, and in its place appeared a new 'official' organ called 'The Path to Liberty,' which declared that there was no place for prisons in any town! The only people who dared to appear in the deserted streets were the Green Guards, who rode round proudly in requisitioned vehicles, dressed in looted furs and greatcoats. A few days later 'Batko' (*i.e.* 'Daddy') Makhno himself, a little peasant with cunning eyes and long hair, arrived with his staff and took up his quarters in an hotel. He seemed to be delighted at the importance he had attained.

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He promptly laid a 'contribution' of twenty-five million roubles on the town, this to be paid within three days. But, before this time elapsed, the Green Guards, riotous and drunk, were driven out by a small force of the Volunteer Army. Crowds welcomed the new-comers, who, however, as soon as evening came on, commenced to loot all the Jewish shops and dwellings, in spite of the urgent orders of their leaders and the appeals of the population. As an immediate result, the Green Guards returned, and two days later the town was once more in their possession.

For a whole month they maintained themselves in power. The murdering and looting were this time on a far larger scale than before. The Green Guards took a bloody revenge for their previous failure; the streets were strewed with the bodies of their victims.[1] Thousands of peasants came in from the neighbouring villages, and even from villages some distance off, in order to share in the loot. The 'bourgeois' inhabitants, *i.e.* the literate classes, were living through a period of terror; the workmen refused to join forces with the Green Guards, but simply sat at home, with the result that, just as under the Bolshevists, all the factories stopped work, all the shops were closed, and the town became a city of the dead. All sorts of extraordinary papers appeared: Bolshevist; Anarchist; Left Socialist-Revolutionary; Ukrainian Left Socialist-Revolutionary; Ukrainian Anarchist; Right Socialist-Revolutionary (this was twice

[1] If there was not much killing done on the battlefields of South Russia, there was no lack of it during raids on towns.

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suppressed by Makhno); and heaven knows what else besides! Nobody had time or inclination to read these papers, since it was a full day's work to find a loaf of bread, and at night every one sat in terror at home, awaiting the looters. The electric light went out, and, as there was no oil to be had, the town was in darkness.

At last, after nearly a month of this, the Volunteer Army returned and drove the Green Guards out. Remembering their previous experience, there was no *pogrom* this time. Once again the town resumed its normal life. But not for long. The Bolshevists soon began their great outflanking movement, which drove back the Volunteer Army across the Don, and Ekaterinoslav alternated between Red and Green captivity.

I met many Russians who semi-seriously affected to regard the Green Guards as a manifestation of the real Russian people. If only, they said, a peasant Napoleon were to arise among them, a man who would be to Makhno what Makhno is to the average Russian peasant, such a leader would be able to regenerate Russia and give her a new place among the nations of Europe as a peasant republic. Just as the Bolsheviks (they pointed out) always command a certain sympathy among the town workers, no matter how often and how plainly they disappoint them, so the Green Guards will always be tolerated by the peasants. For the Russian peasant is a shrewd fellow. He thinks that the restoration of proper order and central authority may need years of waiting for, and, meanwhile, he is pleased to see

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the rise of a power not wholly out of sympathy with him, or, at least, less hostile to him than to every other section of the population.

I did not think that the Greens would ever be able to be organised into a really united and authoritative single force; but it was indisputable that the power of these robber bands was likely to increase as the other authorities weakened. Town and country were isolated from each other. The town dweller was starving, while grain was rotting in the villages. The peasant was dressed in strips of tattered rags, because he could not get cloth from the towns.

One evening I started from Novorossisk back to Ekaterinodar. It was usually almost impossible to get there without long preparation, but at the Novorossisk station I was fortunate enough to get accommodation. On the train I met an English political officer on his way up the line. He had just come unexpectedly in contact with the latest movement of the Green Guards. Orders had been given him at Constantinople to proceed on a destroyer to Sochi and to visit the Volunteer garrison of that place, which had been complaining of the presence of Georgian mischief makers. He was met on the quay by a crowd, which conducted him to the offices of the local administration. To his surprise, there was floating over the building, not the accustomed Russian white, blue, and red flag, but an entirely new and original red flag, with a green cross on it. Inside the building he was informed—he knew Russian—that a revolution had just taken place; the Volunteers had been

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driven out and a 'Black Sea Province Peasant Republic' established in its place. The astonished officer was received with courtesy, and even delight, since it was, apparently, felt by the members of the new government that, if he did not already represent benign British recognition of their power, with tact and foresight he might be used to achieve this for them.[1]

I saw later on some of the manifestos published by the new government. They represented what might be called the doctrinaire Socialist-Revolutionary programme, which was by this time an impracticable attempt to strike a mean between the Reds and the Whites. The Bolsheviks were charged with having introduced nothing of real value into the Russia they had ruined, while the Volunteers were blamed for reactionary aims and ruthless means. As usual, there was more invective than definite proposals in these publications, but, so far as a programme could be read into them, they advocated the land for the peasants and 'democracy' all round. That the 'Black Sea

[1] Shortly afterwards General Keyes, the chief British political officer in South Russia, went down to Sochi from Novorossisk in a British man-of-war to get into touch with the Green commanders. He found that the prevailing impression among them was that, once Denikin's forces were disposed of, the Bolshevist armies would crumble, from desertion and mutinies, and Russia would rise up again in the guise of a peasant republic. Voronovich, the Green leader, consented, however, to accompany General Keyes back to Novorossisk in order to confer with Denikin's people. Unfortunately, General Lukomsky, the head of the Volunteer civil administration, refused to meet Voronovich, and the latter returned to Sochi, to find that he had been deposed in his absence for going aboard an 'enemy vessel.' When the Bolshevists eventually conquered the Black Sea coast, Voronovich and other honest Green leaders were shot by them. He and Filipovsky were the unconscious tools of the Bolshevists in their own ranks and at Moscow.

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Province Peasant Republic's' programme was rather negative than positive was, to be sure, characteristic of the whole Green Guard movement. My informants assured me that there were probably Georgians with fingers in the Green pie, but that they were less important than the Bolshevists, who, operating from Tiflis, were financing and practically directing the Green Guards' activities at Sochi. They were hiring them to derail trains and attack Volunteer troops, even when there was no prospect of loot to make such attempts attractive to the Greens.

We reached Ekaterinodar the next evening without untoward incident. The station was flooded with rain, filth, and oil. I jumped out of the carriage into a sea of slime that wetted and splashed me to despair. The street outside the station was ankle-deep in wet, clinging mud, that speciality of the town of Ekaterinodar. Inside the station stood the trains of the more important people in South Russia, who had now had to abandon their positions higher up the line. Thus, nearest the platform, was General Denikin's train, with its Don Cossack guards; on the next set of rails was that of General Holman and the British Mission, other members of which, however, were still housed in the town; elsewhere one saw the trains or coaches of generals, ministers, politicians, delegates, high officials—in short, of every one who could secure a coach. Near by a train pulled out, crammed after the usual fashion. On one train I counted 54 passengers on the engine and tender alone.

I took a dirty tram up into the town. There

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was the usual crowd in the streets. Wonderfully clad Cossacks, armed with a score of weapons, swaggered along. Others there were, as well armed but worse dressed; their huge white or brown hats matted with mud and filth. The Cossacks predominated; otherwise the crowd was composed of the usual variegated Russian elements. I called in at the office of the local paper, the *Utro Yuga*. In the office I met M Peshehonov, who was a minister in one of the Provisional Governments in 1917. He is a patriotic and honourable radical economist, typically Russian in appearance; in fact, he looked more like a carpenter, or perhaps a schoolmaster, than the ex-editor of the principal Russian monthly review in the old days. His old colleague in the editorship of the *Russian Wealth*, M. Miakotin, was also in the office, correcting the proofs of a leading article, with a huge bandage round his face. Leaning over the table was a fierce, dark-haired man with a pointed beard, M. Argunov, an old Socialist-Revolutionary, who was one of the Ufa directory which gave place to Admiral Kolchak's government in Siberia. They were all bitterly anti-Bolshevik. Morshak, whom I had called to see, was also one of the group. These men represented much that was left of intellectual life in South Russia; the grubby little office of the provincial newspaper was now their only centre, and the *Utro Yuga's* single, dark-brown daily sheet their only field. But Argunov and Miakotin were disputing energetically about the precise form in which one sentence of the next day's leading article was to appear.

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As I left the newspaper office and walked towards the main street of Ekaterinodar, the Red Prospect—in pre-Revolutionary days, the Nicholas Prospect—a couple of British tanks swivelled round a corner and ambled past towards the station, much to the interest of the people in the street. I met a friend, a British officer, and together we went down a flight of stairs into a cellar, which, known as the 'Annona,' was the least bad restaurant in the town. We found a table and ordered a meal. The other tables were occupied by truculent and not overclean Cossacks, whose wealth would in many cases appear to be due to raiding expeditions under General Shkuro, whose looting propensities are notorious. They certainly must have had plenty of money, or they could not have afforded to patronise any restaurant in those times, when a single meal cost a good week's pay for a Russian officer. As we looked round at the Cossacks, my friend told me an incident he had overheard a few days before in General Shkuro's train in the station. A Cossack officer entered Shkuro's presence, and, saluting smartly, said that he had no money.

'Well?' said the little general.

'Would it be convenient for your excellency to order me to receive some of my pay? It is six months overdue.'

'Are you one of my officers?'

'Precisely so, your excellency.'

'And you have served with me at the front?'

'Precisely so, your excellency.'

'*And you are in need of money!* Go away!'

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Perhaps the less said about Shkuro and his 'Wolves' the better. General Denikin more than once dimissed him from his command on account of his conduct at the front, and even within the Volunteers' own lines, but Shkuro's popularity with the Kuban Cossacks was so great that, in his absence, the most daring cavalry force in the army was temporarily lost, and, lest the 'Wolves' should desert to the Bolshevists, Shkuro had to be taken back.

They brought our meal at last, and we had commenced upon it, drinking illicit wine from a coffee-pot and in coffee cups, when two men entered the restaurant who seemed to have evaded the prohibition against the sale of intoxicants to a far greater extent than ourselves. They reeled up to our table, and informed us, with many hiccoughs, that they were members of the Don Government and had no table to sit at. They were almost Mongolian types, probably half-Russian and half-Kalmuck. Fortunately, at that moment a table became free at the other end of the room, and they went away. Scarcely had they gone when another Cossack approached. The green star and crescent in his furry hat showed that he was one of the dreaded 'Wild Division,' which is composed of the half-savage Mohammedans of Daghestan. He was the most demoniacal person I have ever seen. Loaded with weapons, half-drunk, wholly unpleasant, he seemed to be spoiling for a row. With a sneering smile, he circled round and round our little table, evidently hoping to provoke one of us to get up and join

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issue with him. A group of waiters, to whom this swashbuckler seemed familiar, bustled up and conducted him, almost by main force, into a curtained 'cabinet,' where he could be heard revelling and shouting. Later on, he fired a revolver, to call a lagging waiter. We were glad to remember that the other private rooms in the restaurant had been requisitioned for troops to sleep in.

Out in the street again I read some of the numerous proclamations that were plastered all over the walls. Most of them were official orders, issued by General Denikin and his officials. Others were proclamations issued by him, headed by the declaration that 'All land must belong to the working peasants and the Cossacks.' But one proclamation was a private venture. It was addressed to the Kuban Cossacks, urging them to stand firm for their hearths and their country, and was signed by some one who added the information that he was 'a grey-haired Cossack of the calm Don River.' As I stood there, I suddenly saw a crowd approaching me at a slow and measured pace. At first I thought it was only another of the funerals which, in the typhus epidemic then raging, passed so frequently down the streets of the South Russian towns. But, as the crowd came nearer, I saw that it was simply the eternal Shkuro taking a walk, followed by his admirers. This redoubtable brigand had just issued a proclamation calling for volunteers to his ranks, and, I suppose, he was showing himself to attract them. He, by the way, had just bought a block of houses and a hotel in Ekaterinodar

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with the proceeds of one of his raids, it was said.

In the Red Prospect, just past the Cathedral Square, a big Union Jack showed the requisitioned Girls' School where the British Mission headquarters were housed. At the door stood a British sentry with fixed bayonet, whom the would-be Bolsheviks in the town regarded with intense awe and respect. General Holman had promised me an interview, and a severe young A.D.C. showed me into the room where the General was resting his huge bulk on a slender school-chair. The General was the image of despair. His Sam Browne belt had worked its way up almost to his shoulders, and his cap lay over one ear. He looked much greyer than the last time I had seen him; he was feeling the situation very keenly. I asked him what he thought of things, and give his remarks as nearly as I can remember them.

'It is impossible,' he said wearily, 'to appreciate the situation and the chances here, when they have a different policy every day at home in regard to Russia. I told 'em so to-day by wireless.'

The Kuban, he went on, had let the Volunteers down ; and once the situation was let down, it was not easy to pull it together again. The Kuban, and not only the Kuban, thought that the Allies had betrayed them, and they did not know what to do about it.

'The people at home can't make up their minds. Archangel has just collapsed; Kolchak has collapsed; these people here are the only ones who are still holding out against the Bolsheviks. Why

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don't the people at home help them wholeheartedly? Don't they know geography? Don't they know where India is? Don't they see the danger? Their indecision is sacrificing thousands of lives—men, women, and children—now and in the future. A few regiments of regular British troops here could settle the business to-day, just as they could have settled it months ago.'

The General shook his head angrily and made a very rude remark about British understanding of Russian conditions. Then he said, 'I put my trust in the Almighty. He will see that these people triumph at last. It was just the same in the War; I was confident then that the Almighty would give us victory over the Germans; and I am confident now.'

I was speaking to another officer about the General's statements, after I had left him, and he suggested that the British troops spoken of need never have been put in the fighting line, had they been sent. It would have been sufficient had they acted as a police force to keep order behind the White lines; this would have prevented the crumbling of the rear that destroyed Denikin's communications and drove back his troops. However, we agreed not to cry over spilt milk; my friend went off to a cabaret of sorts, and I went to look up my friends for the last time.

At one of their flats I met M. Nicholas Chaikovsky, the father of Russian Socialism. He had just arrived from Paris, whither he had gone from Archangel, where he had been President of the North Russian Government. Despite his great

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age, he was one of the most energetic people I met in South Russia. There were hopes that he would become an important member of Denikin's civil administration, which badly needed a few men of his stamp. He was a most picturesque figure, with his commanding presence and his long white beard.[1]

The worst was happening on the front. Tihoretskaya was falling, or had fallen, and we all knew that the fall of Ekaterinodar was near. There was still hope, of course, but very little. I had to say good-bye to my friends. It was the worst moment I experienced in Russia. I knew that half the people I was saying good-bye to were doomed to misery, perhaps even to imprisonment or death, as soon as the Bolshevists entered the town. Morshak told me that what he most feared was the terrible ennui of the Bolshevist régime. No books, no newspapers, no free thinking or talking; just miserable vegetation in a muddy provincial town. He could easily have gone away to Novorossisk, and from there to safety outside Russia, but he would not leave his family, though they courageously advised him to go. I felt as if I were taking farewell of people in the condemned cell on the eve of their execution. To be able to go away myself with comparative ease and to return to civilisation and comfort while these unhappy people stayed there to suffer

[1] M. Chaikovsky was receptive of new ideas; when I told him something about the English movement for National Guilds in industry, he appeared interested, and two days later the *Utro Yuga* had an interview with him, in which he referred enthusiastically to 'this latest development of British democratic thought.'

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was a painful sensation. But I had to go, and they had to stay.

The political situation at Ekaterinodar was menacing. The worst sort of Kuban politicians could not forget the attractions of separatism, and they wanted their revenge for the hanging of Kulabuhov in the previous year. The Volunteer Army had practically ceased to exist as a separate force after the recent disasters, and the Cossack armies were now supreme. Denikin was faced by the demands of the Cossacks as a whole and of the Kuban Cossacks in particular. They made him dissolve his government and dispense with the services of the men who had in one way or another made themselves disliked by the Cossack leaders. Among the men dismissed there were good men, like General Wrangel, and others of less merit, like General Lukomsky. When I was in Ekaterinodar for the last time, in March, 1920, a struggle for power was going on behind the scenes. The chief question was whether the ultimate veto in political matters rested with General Denikin as Commander-in-Chief or with the Central Council of the three Cossack Governments. The Don and Terek Cossacks were fairly tractable; it was the Kuban people who were making trouble. In fact, the twin rumours went round almost nightly that 'Denikin has arrested Timoshenko,' the chief Kuban politician, and, alternatively, that the latter had arrested Denikin. General Romanovsky, General Denikin's chief of staff and the best hated man in South Russia, was daily reported assassinated (a fate, it will be recalled, that afterwards

befell him in Constantinople). Denikin was more than once said to have slipped away to Novorossisk. All these rumours were false.

South Russia, since the fall of Rostov, had become remarkable for the number of 'Governments' in its territory and the consequent lack of any real government. Apart from the military administration, there were the three governments of the Don, the Kuban, and the Terek Cossacks. The Don and Kuban governments were both resident at Ekaterinodar. All three Cossack governments now appointed delegations who joined together in what was known as the 'Supreme Circle.' This body in turn chose representatives to join General Denikin's nominees in the newly formed 'South Russian Government.' General Denikin's nominees were mostly men of known courage and merit, but they felt that the conditions of service were too unsatisfactory, in view of the Cossacks' common political front against all non-Cossack elements in the South, and they showed no eagerness to accept office. It was only with the greatest difficulty that the Cossack hotheads in the various governments were induced to agree to General Denikin's remaining commander-in-chief.

It began to be accepted as certain that Bolshevik German and Green Guard influence was at the bottom of the Kuban politicians' assumed stupidity.

Amidst all this intrigue and trickery, General Denikin was the hardest worked man in South Russia. Here was a typical day's programme.

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At nine in the morning he motored to the town from his train and supervised the work of the Staff there. At noon he returned to the station and received his officers and visitors. At three he dined, after which he retired to his study to work until six, when his reception recommenced. At nine the Staff presented its evening report; when this had been examined, the stream of visitors went on until, in the early hours of the morning, the General threw himself dead-beat upon his bed.

At last I left Ekaterinodar. I spent the previous night in the train, in anticipation of its leaving at short notice. For this hundred mile journey I made preparations as if for a passage of the desert. For the Greens (like the lice) were more active than ever. They derailed and held up trains with ever greater persistence. They were even supposed to be meditating a raid upon Ekaterinodar station in order to kidnap General Denikin. I fitted out the compartment in which I was travelling with great care. A revolver close at hand, a supply of provisions and books; blankets; any amount of naphthaline to scare the lice; you could see what a long and perilous undertaking the little journey was to be! The train drew out of Ekaterinodar at about nine in the morning. There were two British officers in the carriage, and a crowd of refugees, including, rather significantly, several members of General Shkuro's family. As we left the station two Russian officers who were standing beside the line and happened to notice the British officers at a

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window, remarked loudly, with that naïve malignity which had become characteristic of popular Russian-English relations in the atmosphere of disaster, 'Look, the English are running away.'

The train ambled along all day. We stopped about once an hour at stations, where a detachment of small boys would jump off and hawk the latest Ekaterinodar papers, which were eagerly purchased by the crowds on the platform. In most cases the towns and villages that the stations served were several miles away, and a small independent hamlet had sprung up round the station. Here the peasants brought milk, butter, and eggs to hawk to the passengers, to whom such articles were rarities in the towns, though the Kuban steppe that we were passing through abounded with them. It was to be observed, however, that despite the abundance, the prices charged by the shrewd peasants were almost up to those of the towns. Usually there would also be one or two girls selling hot patties and pancakes, not too clean but very appetising on such a journey. A great trade was done in sunflower seeds, which both the passengers and the station crowds devoured with assiduity, spitting out the husks upon the platform, which was littered with them, despite the huge notices prohibiting this, left on the walls from the old days. I wondered how many of the seemingly peaceful people on the station were Green Guards resting from their labours.

It was well on in the afternoon when we came to a station about two-thirds of the way to Novorossisk. We stopped here so much longer than the

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usual twenty minutes that I was sent to make inquiries. All round the steppe was radiant with the promise of spring. It was terrible to think that soon it might be disfigured by the desolation of the war that was gradually rolling down upon it. Looking at it in its peaceful state, I remembered the delightful country life of Russia in pre-Revolutionary days, and for a moment it was possible to forget the horrors of life just over the horizon. A couple of sailors came by with a cart, on which they had loaded a few sacks of flour for their boat at Novorossisk. A drunken Cossack struck up a gay tune on his balalaika. The stationmaster told me that the Greens had derailed the last train coming up from Novorossisk, and that it was very doubtful if we should be able to proceed until the line was repaired. We might be stuck there for several days, he said. We looked around for the chance of food, but there was none left. It was with relief that we started off an hour or two later, the driver having received orders to try to get through. A few miles along, we came to the scene of the accident. The Greens had torn up the rails of one line, and the engine and several carriages of the up-train had been overturned. No lives had been lost, nor apparently had any attempt been made to rob the passengers. Everything, indeed, went to show that the thing had been done more with the aim of upsetting the traffic than for loot, a policy that proved the increasing control of Bolshevist agents over the Greens. It was fortunate for us that the Greens had pulled up the other line and not ours, or else

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we should have been the first train to meet disaster at that place.

At the next station we stayed a long time. There was a train there full of a wild-looking Cossack detachment, who, I heard from a disgusted British subaltern, had tamely allowed the Greens to kidnap their commander from them the previous night, the while they played merrily on their balalaikas. The Englishman was in command of a trainload of tanks that stood on another siding, on their way up to the front. He said he supposed that as soon as he handed them over to the Volunteers, these would pass them on to the Bolsheviks. However, he said, that won't much matter; my 'Roosky' crews have already stolen six magnetoes out of the eight tanks, and from the way they worked them in Novorossisk the engines won't be much use to anybody in a week or two. He ran on with his grievance.

'They look at the tank,' he said, 'and, mind you, they've never even seen one before. And they say, "Oh, that's all right, we know how to manage it; you don't need to teach us"; and then they get in and can't do anything with it, except loot it. Oh, I'm sick and tired of them and their beastly country and every one and everything in it. The only decent people are the women. If the men had a twentieth of the pluck of the women they'd have smashed the Bolos long ago.'

As an illustration of which he informed us that there were two women officers in one of the trucks in the siding. One of them had been wounded four times and the other six. Both had made the

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original campaign with Kornilov across the Kuban Steppe. I had seen such women officers of the Volunteer Army walking about in the towns, but had never met them at home. I took the opportunity to call upon these two. They seemed on intimate terms with my guide and another British subaltern, but they greeted me with enthusiasm when they found I could speak Russian. You had to look twice at them to see that they were women; in their uniforms and cropped hair they looked like young Russian officers of the more usual sex.

The younger one, with her wounded arm in a sling, promptly asked me what a certain English word meant. It was the word that Mr Kipling darkly refers to as 'the adjective.' I replied confusedly that I did not think there was such a word.[1]

'Oh, yes, there is,' she said, 'it comes in in every conversation.'

'Impossible,' I remonstrated.

Just then a deep British voice came across the truck. 'Where's that —— jam?' it said.

'There you are!' cried the lady, with delight. '——! ——!' And she repeated the word a dozen times in triumph.

Then she and the other girl, who looked as if she was sickening for typhus, told me some of

[1] My pretended ignorance contrasts unfavourably with the attitude of a certain English general's wife, who, travelling through a wild part of the Middle East to join her husband, heard 'the adjective' repeated unctuously by some of the local population at an obscure railway-station. 'Aha!' said the lady, 'the British Army has been here.'

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their adventures at the front and behind the lines. One was a captain in the Alexeiev Regiment; the other a lieutenant in the Kornilov Regiment, I think. Their wounds were genuine enough, and they insisted on showing them to me. Neither of them was more than about eighteen years old; but this was, at least, their third year of fighting. Altogether, it was clear that they did their fighting like brave men, and took their pleasure like gallant women.

After drinking tea with them, I returned to our train, which, crowded, dirty, hungry, and unlit except for a few private candles, was about to resume its slow way. We reached Novorossisk before it grew light again, having covered the hundred miles from Ekaterinodar in nineteen hours and without serious accident, except for one person who, being somewhat drunk or sleepy, had rolled off the roof of the next carriage and had, presumably, broken his neck, unless he had had the luck to fall on top of one of the typhus corpses that were to be found stark at the side of the track, where their comrades on the troop-trains had thrown them at the first signs of the serious progress of the disease. A fellow-traveller had quietly appropriated his basket of butter and eggs, and there was an end of it.

What did one life more or less matter?

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CHAPTER VII

NOVOROSSISK: THE LAST STAND ON THE MAINLAND

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CHAPTER VII

NOVOROSSISK: THE LAST STAND ON THE MAINLAND

TRYING to follow the political and military situation in South Russia in March, 1920, rather reminded me of going to the dentist. One reached a point at which the tension was agonising. It seemed impossible that anything but complete collapse could follow. Moreover, this seemed necessarily imminent. And yet, one paused on this pinnacle of unpleasantness; one stopped and stopped there, until, imperceptibly, one became accustomed to it, and the immediate danger of collapse seemed to have passed over. At the beginning of the month, no Russian and few foreign observers could have imagined that the strain would be withstood another week; but a fortnight later we were in just the same position, or, anyhow, not much worse off; and from the mere fact that things still remained much the same, we began to pluck up hope and to fancy that in a short time the situation would, perhaps, change for the better. At the beginning of the month the Red cavalry, under the ex-sergeant, Budyenny, was within a short distance of Tihoretskaya, a vital nerve in Denikin's line; the Kuban troops were retiring from the Front to their homes; the political situation was as dark

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as could be, and full of intrigues and uncertainty; it was accepted as an axiom that the fall of Tihoretskaya would be followed by a rising at Ekaterinodar, and, altogether, you could not go to bed without wondering if the next morning would not bring the Reds or their friends, the Greens, into the town of Novorossisk. A fortnight later Budyenny was still round Tihoretskaya, and the political situation was as dark as ever, but not much worse. An improvement was reported in the behaviour of the Kuban Cossacks. It is certain that Budyenny himself and his men seemed to be anxious not to make a bad impression by maltreating the population of the places that they occupied ; but, unfortunately for them, the Red infantry that followed them up continued the methods associated in the Russian mind with the Bolshevists. Reports arrived of terrible happenings in several Cossack villages; some thirty cases were traced where unhappy villagers had been tortured to death, and some women were said to be on their way to Ekaterinodar who had been whipped by a Bolshevik patrol. The Kuban men saw themselves faced with the alternative of fighting for their country or being maltreated in their villages, and many of them seemed to decide to choose the more honourable course. A boat even arrived at Novorossisk from the Crimea, carrying Kuban troops who had insisted on returning to their own country, in order, they said—mendaciously, perhaps—to fight the Bolshevists face to face.

On the map, it seemed impossible that the position could right itself. Against any real army

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everything would have been over long before. But, bad as things were with the Whites, they were no better with the Bolsheviks. Their troops were as poor fighting quality as the Whites; the *morale* of their officers was, if possible, worse; the peasants hated them more than anybody else, and they were now called upon to advance into Cossack country, which was certain to be unfriendly. No one would have been surprised to see the Whites back again in Rostov as the result of a sudden victory, and preparing for a drive upon Moscow in the summer. On the other hand, one could not deny that the same short period might well see the final collapse of the anti-Bolshevist forces as then constituted, leaving them with only the Crimea, and perhaps not even that, to their name. Prophesying in Novorossisk under those conditions could be only a matter of temperament. It was, indeed, upon temperament that everything depended. Could General Denikin and the Cossack leaders, who seemed to have temporarily shelved their disagreements, rouse the people to take the fight with the Bolshevists more seriously? Or would the inhabitants of Novorossisk, natives and refugees alike, continue to look upon themselves as merely the badly used spectators in a struggle that was not their own? I had to confess to myself that a walk through the half-dozen streets that made up the greater part of the town gave no witness that people were waking up. All the average person seemed to be thinking about was how to get away to Constantinople under the Mackinder evacuation scheme,

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or, if this way of escape was not open to him, how best to dissociate himself from 'politics' and the appeals and requirements of the Volunteers, in order not to get into trouble if the Bolshevists came later. The demoralisation of a people in defeat takes many forms; I think we saw most of them in Novorossisk in that terrible period.

Two British boats at least, perhaps more, left the harbour in the first week of March, 1920, loaded up with refugees; and all the other British boats in the Black Sea were earmarked for this duty. Long lines of Russians stood before the British Embarkation office at the Cement Works, near the Mission headquarters, and about two miles outside the town of Novorossisk across the bay; others were out on board the vessels on which they had been promised embarkation. They had first to apply to an office in the town, which was conducted by the Russian and British authorities jointly. As was only to be expected, the minor Russian officials soon began to give way to bribes, and before long everybody in the town knew how best to get a ticket without being entitled to it, and the approximate cost. People were quite unashamed; I used to hear them arranging false medical certificates and deals in evacuation tickets, with hardly any pretence at concealment. They were not altogether to be blamed, since it had long since become impossible to buy a ticket on the ordinary steamship lines in the proper way. The principal passenger line to Batum and Constantinople was the Italian Lloyd, and I am compelled to say that this line conducted

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its business in a perfectly disgraceful manner. Its agents rose to the importance of kings; in their hands rested the distribution of the tickets, and thus the lives of an appreciable proportion of the people in Novorossisk. Not only did they refuse to take roubles in payment, but they accepted foreign money only on what they were pleased to call the 'gold basis,' *i.e.* at the *pre-War* exchange value of the Italian lira. They raised their fares to an amazing figure, and, when their victims did get on board, these discovered that the charges did not include food. Thus, having spent sometimes hundreds of pounds, or hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of roubles, in obtaining a ticket, they were forced to obtain still more money to pay for their food—also, of course, on the 'gold basis.' After this, they would ask for their cabins. As often as not, they would be informed that no cabins were available. A few minutes later one of the ship's crew or officers would sidle up and explain that he had a berth to dispose of if the passenger would like to purchase it from him. I knew a party of Russians who paid the chief officer of one of these Italian liners one hundred English pounds in cash—cheques were not currency with these sharks—for his cabin from Novorossisk. At Batum he informed them that the contract had expired and that he would require an identical sum for the use of the cabin to Constantinople! I was myself only once upon an Italian boat, in the Black Sea, the *Cleopatra*, from Batum to Novorossisk; but that was before the panic. What I am now describing took place

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after the New Year of 1920, and continued at all the Black Sea ports at which the Italian boats called. None of us had, perhaps, any reason to feel proud of our reputation in South Russia and the Caucasus, but everybody was agreed that the behaviour of the Italian shipping companies was the last word in shameless rascality.

To return to the little defects of the Anglo-Russian evacuation bureau at Novorossisk. The British Vice-Consul and his assistants had to visé the permits of the successful candidates for evacuation to Batum, after these had been handed out by the evacuation bureau. It soon became obvious that a large number of the applicants were neither members of officers' families, nor sick, wounded, and incapacitated officers, who were the people we had undertaken to get away. One particularly unpleasant individual presented his permit at the Consulate. The Consul saw that he was an unmistakable Jew speculator. 'I won't give you the visé,' he said.

'Oh, but you must,' replied the unwholesome object of official Anglo-Russian sympathy.

'Indeed, and why must I?'

'Because I have paid five hundred thousand roubles for the permit,' said the speculator, 'and the man who sold it to me at the bureau assured me that you would have to visé it.'

However, the Consul was firm, and quite a number of rich speculators were temporarily disappointed of their passages on the British boats. After a time they ceased to worry about having their passports in order, deciding that the Russian

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subordinates at Batum or the Turkish police at Constantinople could more easily be squared; and they took their way out of South Russia in a variety of craft, from Italian liners to fishing-boats.

It was pathetic to see the long line of carts piled high with baggage, accompanying the bona-fide refugees down from the town to the Eastern Quay. Heaven knows how much the carters charged the unfortunate people, but they, too, practised all modes of extortion. A humorous touch to the picture was provided, however, by the characteristic ingratitude of some of the people who were profiting by our generosity. They were under the impression that the chief function of the British Mission was to minister to their comfort and fads. Indignant duchesses protested volubly against being forced to share accommodation with mere countesses. Two Grand Duchesses of imperious but mutually hostile characters—one of whom had been rescued from Kislovodsk by the efforts of General Brough, whose work, and that of the British Railway Mission under him, was deserving of all praise in the evacuation of Novorossisk, as elsewhere—had to be separated, one going to Constantinople, the other being consigned to Batum. Even so, one of them hammered the junior British embarkation officer with her umbrella because he put her in a different cabin from a favourite companion. A few months later I met a Russian lady at Athens, who complained that the British had forced her, against her will, to leave Novorossisk, and that, when she reached

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Prinkipo, she had been compelled to clean out her room! She assured me with a hysterical laugh that only the Bolshevists' invasion of Britain would satisfy her desire for revenge. It was people like this who were scandalised when a Novorossisk paper published the presumably inaccurate statement that the refugees at Prinkipo had to get up at four in the morning; and who then set about abusing us as evil-intentioned abductors. It was true that nobody knew where they were to be sent to; the officials in charge of the business had to tell inquirers that the destination of the evacuated people was uncertain, now that Prinkipo was full.

True details of the horrors of quarantine on arrival at the Bosphorus, abominably mismanaged by the Inter-Allied authorities at Constantinople, came out, and complicated the emotions of our *protégés*. Naturally, they all wanted to go at the last moment, since it was difficult for them to guess, even remotely, where they would be sent, what they would do when they got there, how long their exile would last, and whether they would ever see their friends again. The result of all this confusion, for which the Russians were not wholly to blame, was that all sorts of people were taken off who might quite well have been left behind, while others, whose position was much more perilous in the event of the Bolshevists' coming, had no chance to get away. Under the circumstances obtaining in South Russia any other outcome of the Mackinder scheme would have surprised me. However, a lot of decent people

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did get away, Ouspiensky and his family (rescued with difficulty from a suburb of Ekaterinodar) among them.

It was about this time that General Holman issued an order, to be signed and read by all British officers of the Mission, in which, so I was told, he accused them of 'windiness,' *i.e.* loss of self-control, and of interfering with the Russian command's orders. This curious document had the effect of helping to turn the sorely tried patience of the British officers into contempt for the Russians generally, and hatred of their own particular work in connection with them. The outlook of this document was typical of the spirit that we had come to associate with the British commanders. Perhaps we were wrong to blame General Holman personally for his policy in general; perhaps he had strict orders from home of which we knew nothing.[1] Anyhow, he was at the head of the British Mission, and the British Mission was pursuing a thoroughly wrong policy. I can explain what I mean best in the form of a parable. Imagine a dipsomaniac appealing to his friends for help to overcome his vice. His friends proceed to load him with every inducement to continue tippling; the more drink he consumes, the more they provide, all the time assuring him that he knows best what he wants. Is it not rather the part of true friends to take the drunkard firmly

[1] Perhaps he had contradictory orders from the pro-Denikin and anti-Denikin British authorities, whose influence was about equally matched in the Near and Middle East, and who spent most of their time hindering the progress of each other's carefully planned schemes.

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by the scruff of his neck and see that he only gets into his hands what is good for him, and that he uses properly what he is given? The official policy of the British Mission towards General Denikin was to give him everything he wanted and to let him do pretty much what he liked with it, balancing this with an amount of good advice, which he could follow or not, as he and his Russian advisers thought fit. I dare say I am assuming too much in saying that this was the real policy of the Mission's heads; but, anyhow, this was how it seemed to work out in practice, and General Holman's circular was taken as proof of his misunderstanding of the position. He seemed so like General Denikin (whom he imitated also in his devotion to the anti-Bolshevist cause and in his untiring work for it) that the same things deceived both.

The whole atmosphere grew tenser as the story of the recent evacuation of Odessa became properly known. I heard it in all its details from some of the British officers who arrived from Odessa at Novorossisk, and from various other sources, American and Russian.

By the end of January, 1920, the inhabitants of Odessa had already become panic-stricken. The Governor, General Schilling, published quieting notices throughout the town, but no one took them seriously. Schilling was, perhaps, the least efficient of all the Volunteer generals. Suffering from a painful disease, a typical martinet of the old régime, and a man with neither will nor valour, he had a staff around him that was, for the most

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part, composed of *embusqués* and drawing-room soldiers. There was so much disorder in the town, from the commencement of the panic, that civilians could not with impunity venture out at nights; not only were the streets full of thieves, but even the local militia were not above accosting passers-by and compelling them to hand over their overcoats, boots, and money. Fuel was difficult to obtain and very dear. Owing to the fuel shortage, whole families were herded together in single rooms, and the typhus epidemic assumed extraordinary proportions. There were no clean clothes to be had, of course, and it is impossible to estimate the ravages of the disease. Bread was abundant, as it always is at Odessa; it was, indeed, calculated that two years' supply was stored in the city. But the price rose day by day, as the local money depreciated. General Denikin's latest issue of notes was no longer accepted by anybody; the Don roubles also went out of use, except in payment of small accounts ; everybody who had any Kerensky money hoarded it against the Bolsheviks' anticipated arrival; a certain amount of exchange took place with Ukrainian currency.

The first week in February found the panic at its height. The shops were practically all closed. Crowds flocked to the quays in the hope of being taken away by the Allied warships in the harbour. The danger was not so much from the Bolshevists outside the town as from those inside it; every hour the 'local Bolshevists' grew bolder; there were intermittent fusillades throughout the night, because, as soon as one rifle went off, everybody

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else who had one fired it off in sympathy. The Volunteer officials still posted notices urging the population to be calm and to form a defence force for the town. But these officials were seen to be disappearing from their offices, and other people concluded from this that the chances of holding the town were lessening. General Schilling was one of the first to take refuge in a boat in the harbour. He said that he had handed over the defence of the town to the senior British naval officer, and washed his hands of it. He was joined on board the 'Vladimir' by many others of his hopeful staff. There were said to be 47,000 Volunteer officers in hiding in Odessa; I think this figure must be exaggerated, but, still, there were certainly many thousands, and, with a few exceptions, these men failed utterly to do their duty. The exceptions, however, were led by two of the bravest officers in the South of Russia. The leader of the Russian forlorn hope was Colonel Stessel, the son of the defender of Port Arthur, and his assistant was a certain Captain Maximov. When Schilling deserted his post, these two men organised a small detachment of officers to help to get the wounded and sick down to the harbour, where the British vessels were waiting to evacuate them. Right to the last these men worked to save their countrymen. At the end the British officers on the quay, who had refused to allow any other fit Russians of military age to take the badly needed places on board the boats, invited Stessel and Maximov and Maximov's wife to go on board. We have allowed no cowards on board, the Englishmen said, but

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you are brave men, and we should be proud to help you. The two Russians refused to embark. They said they would remain on land and march out of the town with their score or two of volunteers, and try to make the Rumanian border. 'But, at least,' said the Englishmen to Maximov, 'your wife will come with us.'

Maximov and his wife drew apart; it could be seen that he was persuading her to accept. But, at last, he turned round, and, half in sorrow, half in triumph, he said, 'My wife thanks you, but she has decided to stay with us to the end.'

Then, drawing up their tiny force, these three very brave people led the way out of the town towards the (post-War) Rumanian border. The British admiral sent a cipher message to the Rumanian Government asking them to give the fugitives every assistance. What happened to Stessel and Maximov after this, I have not been able to find out for certain. Their bravery redeemed the disgrace of the other Volunteer officers at Odessa.

But I have anticipated by a day or two. The Volunteer commanders desired the British warships in the harbour to shell the town. This the British refused to do. But they endeavoured to gain time for the evacuation by shelling the roads by which the main Bolshevist force was approaching the town. One lucky shot from the 'Ajax' demolished a building full of Bolshevist army commissars, to the great indignation of the

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survivors. Five or six British officers, who composed the British mission in the city, tried to get the Russians to fortify and hold a line outside the town. Each took a hundred Russians with him; but, by the time they reached the outskirts of the town, most of these had faded away. One officer succeeded, however, in conducting eighteen machine-gunners to the line he wanted them to defend. He went into a building to report his arrival by telephone, but, when he emerged, the whole eighteen had disappeared, leaving the machine-guns behind them.

The British officers waited in Odessa a day longer than the other foreign missions; they then made their way down to the quay, and one of them was wounded by a Bolshevist sniper. The only real fight put up by the Russians, besides Stessel's little force, was by the cadets of the schools and military training colleges. These brave children, the majority of them not more than fifteen years old, and many of them still younger, fought to the end, and my informants saw some of them being carried on board the Allied vessels, severely wounded.

The scene on the quay the last morning was terrible. Snipers were firing at the docks, which were black with people and their goods, from the upper floors of the houses near by. In the crowds that were struggling on the quays to get away every man suspected his neighbour of being a Bolshevik in disguise, and many fatal encounters took place between the frightened people. As the Allied boats steamed out, filled with refugees,

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the crowds that were left behind went down on their knees to them and waved and screamed in the hope of attracting attention. The crowd tried to rush one of the Russian boats that was full up, and the captain had to drive them off with machine-guns.

According to eye-witnesses, a Greek destroyer in the harbour not only refused to take away refugees, but actually would not remove its own nationals, and appealed to the English and American authorities to save them. The reason alleged was that there was no room on board. Yet, at the last moment, three unhappy women were sent ashore, and the crew wasted three-quarters of an hour loading a looted motor-car on board. As the car was pushed up the planks on to the destroyer's decks, two Russians were seen to creep up behind it and slink on board. Presumably they, at least, did get away.

As soon as the last of the boats had been towed out of the freezing harbour, the crowd disappeared, realising that their last hope of escape had gone, and soon the whole place was deserted, except for the bodies of the dead and for a few people who had made their way out to the lighthouse, where they still seemed to hope for rescue. Looking through their field-glasses, the officers on the ships could not see a single sign of life in the town, except for one man who dodged swiftly across a street and disappeared into a house. At night the town was in darkness; the light had failed for several days; all the factories had ceased to work; and there were not even patrols in the streets.

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duly translated it from the paper in which it appeared to furiously angry audiences both in the British mess at Novorossisk and in the wardroom of the American destroyer that had carried the Admiral to Odessa.

We at Novorossisk wondered to what extent the sad business at Odessa was to be repeated there. Indeed, although Novorossisk was so much farther from the Front than Ekaterinodar, its inhabitants had been considerably more disturbed since the beginning of the year than those of the Cossack capital. For this, of course, the Greens were chiefly to blame. One night in March the Greens rushed the civil prison and released all its occupants. The next night I was walking back to the British Mission from the town, when I was stopped by an agitated group of Russian militiamen, who demanded my 'documents.' When they had satisfied themselves about my identity, they explained that they had been ordered to stand-to all night, in anticipation of the Greens rushing the military prison also. When the morning came, however, we learned that the military prison had been rushed after all, with complete success. The following evening I was playing bridge on board an American destroyer in the middle of the harbour. Suddenly a loud explosion interrupted our game. Through the window of the wardroom we saw two star-shells exploding in the sky. Immediately the destroyer's bell rang, calling every one to stations. Delighted at this prospect of action, the ship's officers rushed up on deck, and a landing party put off to the shore to

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guard the American Red Cross personnel and stores. The coverings were swiftly pulled off the guns, and heavy ammunition was brought up. I went on deck, trying to see as much as possible without getting in the way. The searchlights of the 'Emperor of India' and the other warships lit up the harbour and the quays. We saw stray civilians on the piers dodging the blinding rays, and wondered if they were Bolsheviks or Greens or other enemies of the peace. Meanwhile, our own searchlight picked up a schooner that was drawing alongside one of the huge American merchantmen in the harbour, to the consternation of these two boats, which signalled that the schooner was a friend. Signal lights were twinkling at the mastheads of the warships; agitated merchant captains were working their semaphores and lights. But, after half an hour of excitement, the order was given to replace the guns' coverings and to dismiss. The alarm was over. The 'Emperor of India's' searchlight continued its nightly task of patrolling the neighbouring hills, and, covered by its watchful rays, I was set ashore as soon as our game was finished. Next day we learned that the Greens had been rushing the Volunteers' wireless station; the raid was successful.

Thus, night after night, the business went on. Every one in the town was nervous and distraught. The Greens were said to enter the rooms of Volunteer officers in the evenings, urging them to join their colleagues in the Green ranks.

Even without the Greens, the town had had a bad winter. The cold had been so extreme that

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scores of deaths from exposure had taken place. The icy Nord-Ost wind had done a lot of damage in the town. But, far worse than the cold, was the typhus. It raged everywhere. The troop-trains were full of it, and the corpses of victims lay under the snow all along the line from Rostov, where they had been thrown out of the carriages, dead or alive. Every minute of the day one saw typhus patients being assisted along the streets towards the hospitals. I visited one or two of the best hospitals, trying to find a bed for a Russian friend who was ill. I have never seen anything so horrible. In some wards there were two, or even three, typhus patients in each bed, with others lying between the beds on stretchers or on the bare boards. Needless to say, there was an almost complete lack of linen for the patients and the beds. Even this will not convey to the English reader what the hospitals were like. To understand the conditions, he must allow every detail to be as bad in its own way as the few I have mentioned.

It was almost impossible for a Russian to avoid typhus. All the public baths were closed; fuel was unobtainable, and the overcrowding was worse than it had ever been even in Rostov and Ekaterinodar. To add to the misery, there came a shortage of food. In the old days Novorossisk had been one of the chief grain ports of the world. To this day, the enormous corn shoots remain on the quays, among the largest in the world, I was told. But for several days in March there was no bread to be bought. I saw a bank-director

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of the English 'Bradbury' rose to 10,000 roubles, and even more. Everything was going to seed. What was still good was nearly drowned in the flood of selfishness, cowardice, treachery, and incompetence. No one who had known the Russians in pre-Revolutionary days would have recognised them in the Novorossisk people of those March days.

One morning an amusing article appeared in a local paper. I read it in the company of two or three Russian friends, and we agreed that its gruesome humour gave in some ways a better glimpse of conditions in Novorossisk than volumes of description would have done. Tears of laughter came into my friends' eyes as they read the article. It purported to be 'A New French Course,' an Ollendorff up-to-date. The contents were arranged in the form of question and answer, in the approved fashion of the familiar questions about 'the pen of my gardener'. Here it is:

1. *Question.* Where are your parents, your brothers and your sisters?

Answer. My mother got left (*better* remained) in Soviet Russia; my father has been evacuated to Prinkipo; my brothers, who have shell-shock and have been wounded, are lying in the hospital-train and cannot be brought into the town, because all the hospitals are full; and my sisters have gone to Constanza and Varna.

2. *Q.* Have you any sugar?

A. No, I have not any sugar, but my cousin Anatol assures me that his second cousin has bought two pounds of sugar for his family from a young lady friend.

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9. *Q.* How much does a pound of butter cost where you are?

A. I do not know how much a pound of butter costs where I am, because I am not fond of articles of luxury. Such products as butter excite me, and I try not to look at them.

10. *Q.* Do you like standing in a queue?

A. Yes, I like standing in a queue, because in this way my day passes easily. Besides, it makes for economy, because, while I am waiting my turn, the shop closes and I can buy nothing, and so my money remains intact in my pocket.

11. *Q.* Have you procured the necessary visés for your passport, in order to leave the country?

A. Yes, I have procured all the necessary visés, but I have no foreign money, and, therefore, I cannot leave the country.

12. *Q.* Was your mother buried in a coffin?

A. Yes, she was buried in a coffin, which we hired for the occasion; and two days afterwards my father died, and so we were able to bury him in it too.

13. *Q.* How many funerals were there in your street to-day?

A. To-day was a very slack day for funerals in our street; there were only five. My female cousin had better luck; in the street where she lives there were twenty-four funerals. My female cousin sat at the window the whole day and enjoyed herself.

14. *Q.* Is it true that your uncle is a remarkable man?

A. Yes, he is, indeed, a remarkable man. He has been ill once with ordinary typhus, twice with spotted typhus, and three times with recurrent typhus. He is impatiently waiting for the spring, in order to fall ill with cholera.

15. *Q.* Do you like walking in the cemetery?

A. Yes, I like walking in the cemetery, because all

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lovingly as the 'Heath Robinson line,' was established round the Mission. My duty, I was informed, as the only 'co-respondent' remaining in the Mission,[1] was to get under my bed at the first alarm and to remain there until the all-clear was given. The chief obstacle to this was that I had not got a bed.

Some of my friends, British officers, who went out on a reconnaissance in the neighbouring country, were shot at by the Greens; one of them was wounded, but the others drew up elaborate plans to advise the Russian authorities how best to fortify the surrounding country and hold off the Bolshevist advance. As usual, the plans were excellent, but the Russians were not in a position to execute them.

Tihoretskaya fell at last, and, seeing no further use in remaining at Novorossisk, I managed to get a passage on an American cargo-boat, bound for Batum. Soon after I left, Ekaterinodar was taken (March 17, 1920); and Novorossisk too, looted and in flames, fell a prey to the Bolshevists' advancing cavalry in the last week of the same month.

A large portion of the Volunteer and Cossack forces deserted to the Bolshevists, but the rest made their way by sea to the Crimea. General Denikin resigned the command, which his generals

[1] Dr and Mrs Williams had already gone away. Mr Hodgson, of the *Daily Express*, whose (to put it mildly) somewhat one-sided despatches were a standard subject of conversation and abuse in the British Mission, had gone home ill some time before. But about this time, Mr Claud Hay, whose death in the Crimea was announced in November, 1920, turned up in Novorossisk; he did not live in the Mission, but somewhere in the town.

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entrusted to General Wrangel. As is in every one's recollection, General Wrangel, after achieving certain successes in the Tauride, was driven back into the Crimea in the autumn of 1920. An unexpectedly early cold snap at the beginning of November froze the lakes that lie between the Crimea and the mainland; the Bolshevists crossed these successfully, after bombarding Wrangel's positions, and, outflanking him, forced him and the remnants of his army to take to their ships and escape to Constantinople.

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CHAPTER VIII

IN THE CRIMEA AND BACK TO THE CAUCASUS

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CHAPTER VIII

IN THE CRIMEA AND BACK TO THE CAUCASUS

THE boat on which I left Novorossisk reached Theodosia, in the Crimea—only a few hours' journey—before the fall of Ekaterinodar or Novorossisk. Things were, therefore, 'normal,' so far as that word had any significance then in South Russia. Theodosia is a town with about as many years—it was founded by the Miletians in the seventh century B.C.—as houses. We found it suffering the rigours of the Russian winter. The temperature was well below zero, and icy winds were blowing from the mountains behind the town.

The place was deep in snow; the boats in the harbour were wreathed with icicles, and all along the quays, the breakwaters, and the old bathing establishments the foam of the sea was frozen into solid white lumps. Theodosia was almost invisible in the whiteness, and the stranger might be excused if, on landing, he asked (as I did) which was the way to the town. The sentry whom I addressed grinned, and told me that I was already in the very centre of Theodosia. I asked him if it was true that the Bolsheviks were or had been in possession of the place, as the rumour went elsewhere, but he assured me that they were not even in the neighbourhood. I walked along

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the main street of the town. It was long and monotonous; for the most part, the houses were buildings of one storey, though a few giants of two or even three floors broke the view. A few people passed me, muffled up in thick coats. They were mostly peasants and officers; but I saw a few 'boorjooees' in the second-hand shops, which, as elsewhere, seemed to be almost the only trading centres. The general impression I got of Theodosia was of a dull little town, whose inhabitants had now neither business nor pleasure to take them out of doors. Later on in the day, I saw a few more people in the streets; but my first impression was unaltered.

I walked on and on along the quayside, past a house where a Union Jack declared the presence of the British Military Mission, and came at last to a suburb of villas where the wealth and aristocracy of Theodosia reside or resided. Here there was not a soul to be seen, and I turned back to the town.

Returned to the main street, I hesitated in a second-hand shop upon the purchase of a rather pleasing fur-coat with a skunk collar. The price asked was thirty thousand roubles, or about ten English pounds. (At Theodosia then the pound exchanged for less than half what one could get in Novorossisk). The coat was presumably the property of some unfortunate person in the town who, following the usual custom, had left it in the shop to be sold on commission. The price was, I suppose, a mere fraction of its value in Western Europe, but I felt that its weight rendered it useless

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outside a Russian winter and I left it for the next comer.

As I left the shop, a rifle barked near by. I turned round to see what the trouble was, and discovered that it was nothing more serious than a militiaman letting off at the numerous ducks that were floating half-frozen at the water's edge. He had hit a bird, and was now waiting eagerly for it to be washed ashore. Near by, and in fact all along the quays, boys well wrapped up and dirty—half of them would presumably die of typhus before the winter was out—were throwing stones at the paralysed ducks. Every now and then one of them would score a hit, and, amid the excitement of his fellows, the marksman would wait for his prey to float, belly upwards, to the edge of the ice. A Russian general passed me, clad in a British soldier's greatcoat. There was nothing unusual in this—most Russians were wearing similar garments. But what was queer was the greatcoat of his lady. It was an identical coat, but it had an absurd trimming of black fur on the collar and the shoulders. The attempt to make a British army coat into a fashionable overcoat for a lady was at once ludicrous and a little pathetic. I bought a paper and read the announcement of a 'special performance' at the theatre that same evening by an artiste who happened to be a passenger on one of the Russian boats in the harbour. I suppose she was a refugee from Odessa and wanted to break the dullness and misery of the voyage and turn an honest penny by running ashore for a few hours. In

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and to leave a surplus for export. Consequently there was no danger of a bread shortage. But all the same the stupid policy of the Government was opposed to its own best interests. The villagers wanted cotton goods, boots, iron and leather goods, sugar, coal, wire for hay pressing, agricultural implements and insecticides. The last articles were the most important, because the wine, tobacco and fruit plantations represented the chief wealth of the country. When I was there, the position was that, if the necessary machinery and sprays were not soon received, the year's crops might easily be ruined.

The co-operative societies, too, were being badly hit by the improvidence of the Government. They claimed to have received goods to the value of several thousands of pounds from the British co-operatives, and to be unable to send in exchange even the barley that they had collected at Theodosia for that purpose. The folly of the Government was holding up in the Crimea, as it had done in the previous year in the rest of South Russia, enormous stores of foodstuffs and other commodities, which, if exported, would have brought back from the outer world the goods of which Russia was in such need. A certain amount of flour was said to have been sent to Batum, and about half as much to France, but that was all. Heaven only knows how the Volunteer Army had managed to accumulate so much administrative stupidity alongside it, but these facts proved the extent of it.

The Crimea is joined on the north to the mainland by the narrow isthmus of Perekop, and

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farther east, at Jankoy, by two bridges, one carrying a road, the other a railway, which led across to the mainland from the straggling coast of the peninsula. During the last week or so before my visit the Bolshevists had been trying to get across by both routes, but without success. At Perekop they were beaten back by a force of loyal troops and schoolboys, most of these latter between the ages of ten and fifteen, who fought as bravely as the boys at Odessa. The Bolshevist attacks upon Perekop had practically ceased; the anti-Bolshevists could have advanced far beyond Perekop if they had wished, but the line across the south of the isthmus was easier to hold and there was for the moment no point in advancing. Thus the main approach to the Crimea was holding firm. On the east the two bridges at Jankoy had been blown up, and the Bolshevists thwarted in their attempts to cross them. They had been trying, however, to outflank the defenders by marching across the ice there. Between the mainland and the Crimean coast in this part there is a chain of bays and lakes, then all frozen over. But at each lake a handful of White soldiers had been posted with a machine-gun, and whenever the Bolshevists tried to advance, the machine-gun bullets mowed them down. The Reds were, of course, unable to move quickly over the frozen surface, and stood no chance against this defence. The day before I arrived they made three attempts to force their way across; their third and last effort was made with a thousand men, a hundred or so of whom were left dead on the ice, while

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the rest retreated precipitately. Their failure to force the approaches to the Crimea had been so evident that it was doubtful if they would continue them; indeed, except for the inevitable bands of marauders, there appeared to be at that time very few Bolshevist 'regulars' in this direction.

It had been said that there was a large number of 'local Bolshevists' in the Crimea, who were expected by their friends outside to create disorders in the Crimean towns and secure them for the Reds. But these hopes had been disappointed. As everywhere else in Russia, the workmen were sick of the whole business, and wanted only peace and order. And now at last there seemed a chance that there would be an improvement in local conditions in the Crimea. For months previously no passenger or goods trains had been running on the Crimean railways, but during the spring, thanks largely to the energetic measures of the British, civilian trains started again. This undoubtedly eased the situation. There is only one main railway in the Crimea, a single track with branches to the chief towns, which are in turn connected with the smaller places by metalled roads. But large crops are produced and there was great need of internal order and communications. One of the chief difficulties in restoring the railway had been the absence of coal. Seven thousand tons of Welsh coal arrived at Sevastopol at the beginning of 1920. The Russian fleet commandeered a large part of it, and the railways took what was left, three thousand tons. The Russian fleet was not doing any fighting, but was used chiefly to carry

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operations of the peninsula. His staff were walking round Theodosia, making up their minds where to billet themselves and how to secure the most comfortable jobs. Fortunately, General Denikin suddenly dismissed Schilling and left General Slashchev in charge.

A curious and significant incident had just occurred in the Crimea. There had been a mutiny at Sevastopol, led by a certain Captain Orlov. The purpose of the mutiny had not been to weaken the opposition to the Bolshevists; on the contrary, Orlov claimed that he was unable to trust his superior officers to fight. He declared that, like Schilling at Odessa, some of them were already slinking on board the boats in the harbour with their families. Orlov and his troops arrested a general and an admiral who were sent to arrest him, and accused them, too, of cowardice. It was not until a detachment of troops was sent against him that he abandoned the insurrection, on condition that he and his troops should be allowed to go to the front 'to retrieve their honour,' as the official papers put it, and that an inquiry should be opened into the whole affair. Quite apart from the form the rising took, it was important as a symptom of the increasing discontent of the junior officers of the Volunteer Army with their seniors. They were tired of the corruption and incompetence that were ruining the hopes of the Volunteers; and they looked upon the Orlov affair as a definite protest against the higher command. I had heard that in Novorossisk some of the junior officers turned a particularly objectionable

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Batum and an undefined 'small zone surrounding it' were to become a *porto franco* under the League of Nations; a French battalion—which rumour said would consist of Africans—and an Italian battalion were to be sent to reinforce our troops, but the British administration was to remain. This measure was to be effective 'until the Russian question is settled.'

The inhabitants of the province were delighted at the decision of the Supreme Council, which to them meant two desirable things: first, the British troops were to remain; secondly, the Georgians were not to be allowed to enter the Province. The prospective arrival of French and Italian troops they regarded with equanimity, mixed with an amused uncertainty how these new-comers would settle down in the bizarre conditions at Batum. Pessimists were, however, to be met with who declared roundly that they did not put a ha'porth of trust in the declarations of the Allies, and that Batum would be surrendered to the Bolshevists or the Georgians, whenever we no longer desired to have the responsibility of running it. As later events proved, these croakers were entirely right.

I learned from various sources that the reason for the cancelling of the evacuation had been the urgent appeals of the Georgian Government, who, going behind the backs of their chauvinists, had begged the British to remain in Batum, for fear lest, if they went, not only Batum but Georgia itself would be overrun. Later, when I reached Tiflis, I found the same explanation accepted, and I record it as an interesting phase of Georgian

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of these three forces in the Batum territory, the British authorities at Batum warned the Georgian Government that this advance was equivalent to a declaration of war upon ourselves as the occupying Power, and insisted that the troops should be withdrawn. The Georgian Government promptly fell on its back and raised its paws helplessly in the air. It could not possibly withdraw the troops, it pleaded, though it was most willing to, because the effect of this withdrawal might well be such a political crisis, in view of the fervent public opinion in Georgia about Batum, as would lead to the resignation of the Georgian Government and its probable succession by a Bolshevik administration. At the same time, the Georgian War Office issued an eloquent declaration, congratulating the Georgian troops on the splendid and valorous manner in which they had occupied the Batum Province.

In view of these circumstances, it is amusing to see how, in fact, the Georgian occupying forces fared. It was not till some weeks later that I myself went up to the frontier villages in the hills where they were; but I venture to interpolate here what I then learned about some of these curious events.

One morning, early in March, the two British subalterns at the village of Hulo, far away in the mountains near the frontier, who, with eight or ten Punjabi soldiers, were successfully superintending the administration of the important district of Upper Adjaria, were awakened by their British orderly with the words:

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'Please, sir, there's a man outside with a white flag; I think he wants to see you.'

The officers sat up in bed, and ordered the men to be brought in. In a minute or two a hand appeared through the door of the room, clutching a rifle with a fixed bayonet, to which was attached a white cloth. Then a Georgian soldier's face was seen at the opening. But the rolls of felt and the huge boots that form part of the Georgian equipment, and were fastened on his back, prevented him from entering the room. He struggled helplessly for a minute or two, unable either to enter or go back. The British officers screamed with uncontrollable laughter. Then their orderly put an end to the scene by taking a running jump at the unfortunate envoy and dexterously precipitating him into the room. The Georgian was, however, so flabbergasted at his misadventures that he was unable to discharge his mission, and the subalterns, through their interpreter, told him to go away and fetch an officer.

In the meanwhile the two English officers—I suppose the elder was about twenty-five, if even as old as that—dressed and had breakfast. A Georgian officer then arrived, and said that the Georgian troops had been ordered to advance into the Batum Province and occupy Hulo.

'Splendid,' said the subalterns. 'We'll come out as soon as we have finished breakfast, and find billets for you.'

Soon they went outside, and discovered a Georgian force of some three hundred men drawn up in battle order. There was a front line, lying

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flat all round the bungalow, then a reserve line, machine-guns, and so on, and, at the back, the stretcher-bearers. The subalterns stepped through this martial array and ordered the Georgian officer to house his troops in some empty buildings a little farther up the hill-side. The Georgians, bewildered at their reception, retired into the houses, and the British subalterns issued orders that they were to stay there and not to come outside. The Punjabis were posted as sentries over them. At this point the Georgian commander, who, in expectation of a scrap, had taken up a strategical position some miles in the rear, arrived and blankly acquiesced in the arrangements.

The next day General Cooke-Collis, the Military Governor of Batum, arrived from Batum with some members of his staff, and called the Georgian commander into council. It happened that the half-dozen British officers, as well as being mostly Irishmen, were all men of six foot or more; so that the Georgian officer, a small man, was at a double disadvantage. When asked whether, the entrance of Georgian troops into the province being virtually an act of war, he wished to fight the British people, the Georgian commander looked up at the giants around him and replied hastily: 'N-n-n-no!' His confusion was so engaging that the British officers could not refrain from smiling, with the result that the Georgian stood on his dignity and desired to leave. He was pacified, however, because the General had a lot more things that he wanted to tell him. The upshot of the matter

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I have not yet mentioned the most absurd incident of the whole business. No sooner had the invaders arrived at Hulo and set the whole district in an uproar than an official request arrived at Batum from Tiflis that the British should allow lorries of food and supplies to be sent up from Batum through our lines to the Georgian forces! Tickled by the impudence of the request, General Cooke-Collis, too kind-hearted to want to see the Georgians starved, acceded to it, and for some time afterwards the Georgian lorries (which were, of course, British ones that the Georgians had obtained from us in the previous year) could be seen passing along the mountain roads to the Georgian 'armies,' with a British sepoy escort sitting on top of each load.

I now decided to go for a tour through the Transcaucasus to Tiflis and Baku, and also, a long cherished desire, to Armenia. If the political weather cleared up, I hoped to be able to cross the Caspian Sea to Persia and spend some time there before returning to Batum.

It was an unfortunate moment for another journey to Tiflis, since, just at this time, some articles I had written for London papers, arrived in the Transcaucasus, and were making the Tiflis papers, all of which were official or semi-official, very angry. The *Struggle*, for example, an official Social-Democratic paper printed in Russian, bluntly called me a double-dyed liar; while the *Ertoba*, in the vernacular, assured its readers that I must be either a Russian ex-official, a speculator, or a gendarme! All were agreed that I was a

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'Denikinist,' the harshest term of abuse in the rather undeveloped Georgian political vocabulary. I noticed a significant difference between the two sorts of replies that the Georgian Press made to my articles. The first school (*e.g.* the *Struggle*) commented on my statements about Georgian vindictiveness towards the Russians and others in the Transcaucasus as being mere slanders, utterly remote from fact. The *Ertoba* type, on the contrary, admitted the charges, and assured its readers that the Russians could expect no mercy from the Georgians, if ever they succeeded in extending their territory to include Batum. One did not have to be a 'Denikinist' to see that something was wrong.

It did not seem to me that the Georgians were any more popular along the coast than they had been in the previous year. (I have mentioned the hostile reception they got in the interior.) To refresh myself on this point, I conducted a miniature inquiry among four people in the Batum Province, whom I had known for long enough to be certain that they represented the average opinions of their fellows. The four I selected were a Georgian from Batum itself; a Georgian from the province; a Kurd; and an Adjarian. The first said that he did not care whether the Georgians came or not, so long as the British troops remained. The country Georgian said that things were much better as they were, since he did not think that the Georgians would be able for long to keep the Province safe from unrest inside and attack from outside. The Kurd, a picturesque

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person disguised as a rag-bag, and stinking of carbolic (he had just spent a month in jail), assured me that he wished the Georgians would come, since then he and his friends would be able to cut them up, just as they had done during the short Georgian occupation in 1918. The Adjarian replied, briefly, that the Tiflis Georgians were no good. These expressions of local opinion, which were quite honest, as none of the four knew that I was pumping him, tallied with the investigations of other independent inquirers. Needless to say, the other elements in this mixed population—the Russians, Armenians, Greeks, and so on—were violently opposed to the suggestions that the Georgians should come in.

Tiflis, however, claimed to have a new argument in favour of the cession of Batum in the results of the recent elections for the Batum Town Council. The results had given rather more than half the seats to the Georgian candidates.[1] But I learned from many sources, local and British, that these elections could hardly be considered a fair test of local feeling. They were held just at the time when the British were making their abortive preparations to evacuate; the non-Georgian elements, therefore, saw little point in voting for a Town Council at such a moment, and nobody except the Georgians took much interest in the compilation

[1] One of the Georgian stock arguments to prove that Batum was a Georgian town was the fact that its municipal mayor had always been a Georgian. Unfortunately for the validity of this claim, Tiflis, the capital of Georgia, had as mayor for ten years prior to 1918 an Armenian, M. Khatissian, afterwards President of the Armenian Republic.

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of the register. Immediately after the election, however, it became known that the British were to remain; the Greek party at once pointed out the defects of the register, while the Russians protested against the validity of an election held at such a moment. The Georgians were, moreover, accused, both by their opponents and by others, of practising the less proper forms of electioneering. What most parties seemed to forget was that the elections were not what a Tiflis official paper called 'a virtual referendum as to who is to have Batum'; they were nothing, more or less, than the election of an urban administration, from which, of course, all the country dwellers in the Province were excluded. If a real referendum of the whole Province had been taken at a quiet moment, the Georgians being prevented from bribery and threats—'If you abstain from voting,' they would say to Georgians, 'you wait till a Georgian Government comes here!'—the result would, I think, have been a shock for any Georgian who honestly thought that the Batum Province was peopled by 'oppressed Georgians,' whose one ambition was to be 're-united to their blood-brothers' of Tiflis.[1]

I went up to Tiflis towards the end of March, and was just in time to find the city full of an officially worked-up agitation about Batum. The official *Struggle* had called upon the 'proletariat of

[1] In July, 1918, the Turks attempted to substantiate their claims to Batum by taking a *plebiscite* (from which, as the Turkish commander gravely informed the Georgian Government, women were excluded in accordance with the customs of all countries, 'except Norway and Sweden.') The Georgians, of course, were furious.

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Tiflis' to drop their tools on a certain morning and to make a manifestation in the main thoroughfare of the town. At the same time, the school children were marshalled and borne off in the same direction. Both workmen and school children were glad of a half-holiday, for which the workmen, of course, received full pay; they demonstrated all the morning and went home for dinner. As a friend of mine said, the 'Tiflis proletariat' would have manifested for the cession of the moon on the same terms. After this wonderful 'demonstration,' a little committee went off to the offices of the various foreign missions to inform them of the 'unanimous wish' of the Tiflis proletariat that Batum should be ceded to Georgia. At the American, French, and Italian Missions, the heads were 'not at home,' and the resolution was left for them in an envelope. Mr Wardrop, the English Commissioner, however, was indiscreet enough to receive the deputation, with results that surprised even the most hardened spectators of Transcaucasian politics.

In the next two or three days the Tiflis papers came out with sensational references to Mr Wardrop's reception of the deputation. One of them announced that Mr Wardrop had 'promised' that the Supreme Council's decision about Batum would be re-considered in favour of Georgia. Another paper, the *Regeneration*, a day or two later, began its leading article as follows :—

'The behaviour of certain British officers in Batum puzzles me,' said the British Chief Commissioner,

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Mr Oliver Wardrop, to the deputation that called on him on behalf of the meeting of the whole nation in the capital of Georgia.

The article went on to show that Mr Wardrop's alleged remark referred to the reports of the venal Georgian agents in the Batum Province, to the effect that General Cooke-Collis and members of his staff were touring the Province and calling on its inhabitants to oppose Georgia's claims to it ![1]

For several days we waited for Mr Wardrop to deny these statements attributed to him. The Russians and Armenians in Tiflis and Batum were thunderstruck. Then General Cooke-Collis himself paid a flying visit to Tiflis. He was met at the station with the usual Georgian fuss, and the usual military band. When he went away in the evening, the Georgian authorities sent only a minor official or two to see him off! But almost the next day the following letter from Mr Wardrop appeared in the Tiflis papers, addressed to M. Gegechkori, the Foreign Minister. (I translate the letter from the Russian form in which it appeared).

March 21, 1920.

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

As you are aware, I have frequently hindered publication in the Press, without my permission, of announcements alleged to have emanated from me; and I understood that Your Excellency had promised

[1] The 'National Council of the united Mohammedan tribes of the Batum Province' published a manifesto on January 16, 1920, again asserting their hostility to union with Georgia. The suggestion that the British officers at Batum were encouraging them to oppose Georgia was ridiculous.

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to take measures not to allow such things to happen. It is quite impossible for me to refute all these announcements, but I desire to inform you that they have been always inaccurate, and sometimes intentionally misleading.

The Tiflis papers of to-day have published what is alleged to be my reply to the Trade Union deputation, led by Mr A. Heladze, which called upon me on March 19, after the carefully stage-managed[1] demonstration in the streets in favour of the cession of Batum to Georgia. These communications contradict one another, and not one of them is accurate. Under these circumstances I consider it useful to enclose herewith a copy of the summary of my observations, which I compiled immediately after this conversation; it will be recognised by the deputation, and by Mr Vahtang Gambashidze, who was also present, as an accurate and correct account of what I really said. I made no promise, nor did I criticise in any manner General Cooke-Collis, who is being subjected to malicious and unfounded attacks, against which I energetically protest.

Yours, etc.,

O. WARDROP.

It was satisfactory to learn at last—the letter, despite its date, did not appear until March 28—that the statements attributed to Mr Wardrop were inventions, and that the Georgians were taking advantage of his known sympathy with them to indulge in what was equivalent to political blackmail. The fact that so old and tried a friend of the Georgians found it necessary to administer

[1] I copied the letter carefully from a Tiflis newspaper into my diary, but even now I can hardly believe that M Wardrop used this bitter but true expression.

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Georgians were disconcerted by its consequences. They were now beginning to realise how much they had owed during the two previous years of their existence as an independent state to the Volunteer Army which they had tried to hamper at every turn. Now that the Volunteers had been routed on the mainland, the path to the Trans-caucasus was clear for the Reds. The general opinion in Tiflis was that in a month or six weeks the Bolshevists would be in Baku. In actual fact, just five weeks elapsed before this happened. The second paradox was in relation to Batum. The Government, outwardly, was moving heaven and earth to get Batum from the wicked British imperialists who—at great inconvenience to themselves—were occupying it. But, as more and more people were becoming aware, the Georgian authorities were intensely relieved that British troops were being left at Batum.

The last few days before going down to Armenia I spent in finding out about a few more of the new mushroom governments that were springing up in the Caucasus. Every day some new government was setting up for itself, with a printing-press for proclamations and a propagandist newspaper; with an address in Tiflis—often only a bedroom in an hotel; and, if funds could be raised, with a delegation to Europe and the Peace Conference. There was, for example, a 'Government' fulfilling all these conditions, and known as the 'Independent Mountain People's Government.' It claimed to unite the tribes of the Caucasus range. There are dozens of these little peoples, scattered through

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The 'Black Sea Peasant Republic' at Sochi issued a new proclamation about this time. It appears that Generals Cotton and Keyes had warned these Green Guards not to attempt to attack Novorossisk while we were evacuating its civilians. The proclamation said :—

The Committee for the Emancipation of the Black Sea Province protests most energetically against such impudent and unexampled behaviour on the part of representatives of a foreign Power in relation to the territory of a sovereign Power [*i.e.* the Green Guards !] and to the illimitable rights of its citizens to work out their own destiny without interference from outside, and to build up a new and free life.

A priceless postscript explained that, General Keyes having declared that he was acting by the instructions of the French and Italian Governments, as well as the British, this protest had been handed to the Tiflis representatives of these countries also. Europe, please note !

A new Government, calling itself the 'Pink Guards,' had established itself at Piatagorsk when the Volunteers evacuated the place. It issued the usual manifestos, but before it had time to appoint a delegation to the Peace Conference, the Bolshevists arrived and put it to flight.

That was a comfort; for it meant, at least, one Government the less.

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CHAPTER IX

THE BETRAYAL OF ARMENIA

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CHAPTER IX

THE BETRAYAL OF ARMENIA

(A Map to illustrate this chapter will be found at the end of the book)

I WENT to Armenia with the common European prejudice against the Armenians. For years missionaries and other people, whose zeal made them a nuisance to quiet people, had been insisting that the Armenians were a civilised nation, oppressed by brutal Turks. *Per contra,* these protestations made me half inclined to credit the cynical statements of the other side, namely, that the Armenians were in every way as bad as their neighbours, that they provoked massacres and oppression by indulging in the same habits themselves whenever they got the chance, that, after all, the Turk was a gentleman, that the Armenians were probably destined by Divine providence to be massacred,[1] and that, had they not been Christians, nobody would ever have taken up the cudgels for them. I was bound to admit that many of the Armenians I had met in various parts of the world were in every way superior to the

[1] It is, perhaps, only natural that pro-Turk and anti-Armenian prejudices should be held and propagated by influential persons in our War Office and similar institutions abroad. It is a sign of the militarist's instinctive sympathy with the barbarian, and corresponding distrust of brains.

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'Our train is moving at last. We are entering, not, as I had expected, the confines of Armenia, but a so-called neutral zone. The population of this, it would appear, are half in Armenian villages, and half in Tartar ones; but the Georgians claim the district on "historical grounds" and because it was included in the Tiflis administrative district of the old Russian régime. The possession of this strip of land was the occasion of the Georgian-Armenian war in 1918, some of the results of which, in the form of ruined bridges and torn-up rails, are to be seen beside our track.

'But now we are in Armenia itself. We have passed a long night in the overcrowded train, which runs only three times a week and loiters desperately at every stop. Armenia is so short of engines, rolling stock, and fuel, and her stock is so badly in want of repair, that nothing better can be expected. The morning light shows us the high plains through which we are passing. Snow is still lying in the sheltered places, and all around are the summits of the snow-mountains of the Caucasus. Tumbled hills break the surface of the plateau through which we travel, and dry water-courses intersect what level places there are. It is pasture country; herds of cattle—great wealth in these days—are feeding on the stony plain, near the occasional villages of primitive mud and stone huts. Another feature of the landscape is the cemeteries that stand out gaunt upon the barren beside the villages. There is little cultivation to be noticed. Neither natural nor political conditions allow much to be sown or reaped in these parts. Tiny strips of ploughed land and a few rice fields are all that is to be seen.

'As, towards evening, we approach Erivan—the journey from Tiflis, a matter of some 250 miles, takes at least thirty hours by train—the giant shape of Ararat dwarfs everything else in view. Its huge

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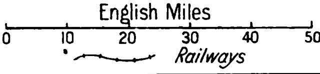
NORTH EAST
ARMENIA
APRIL 1920



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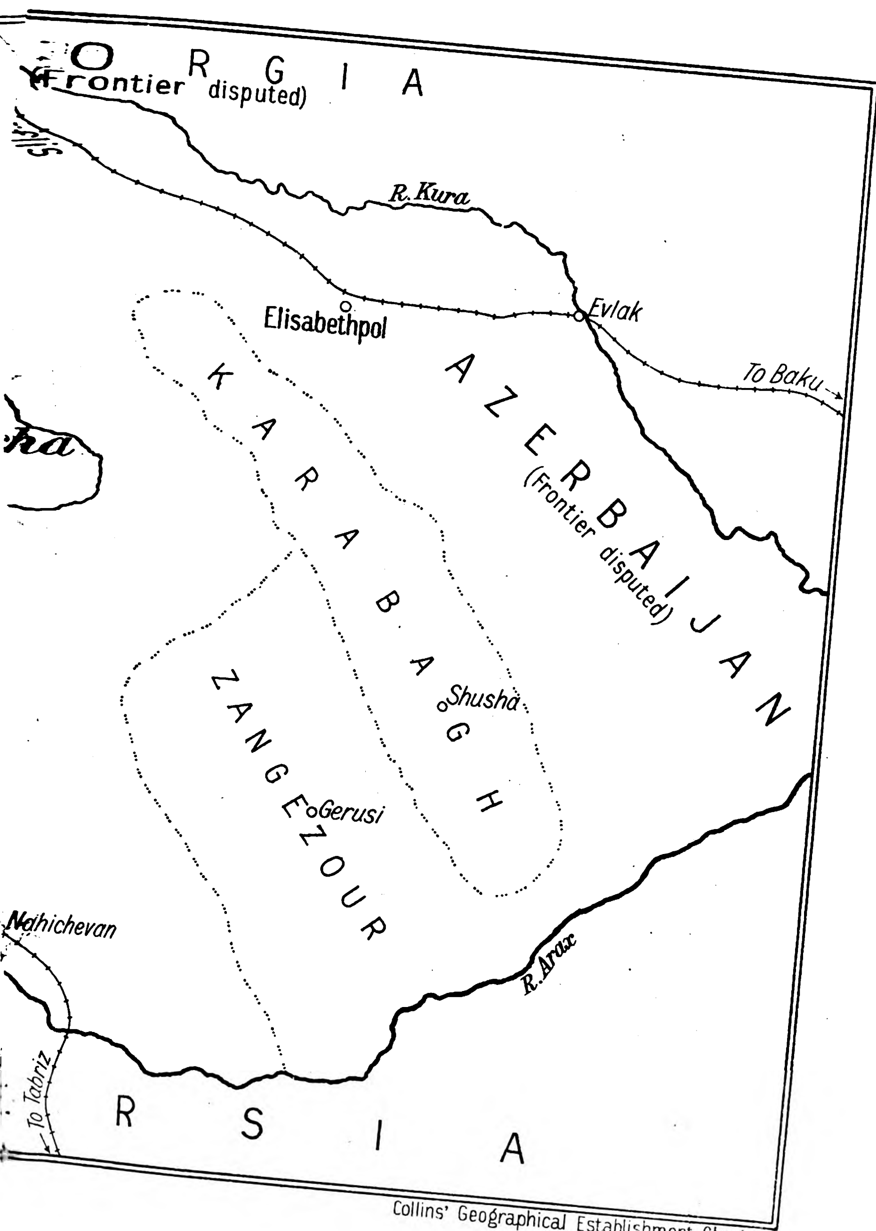

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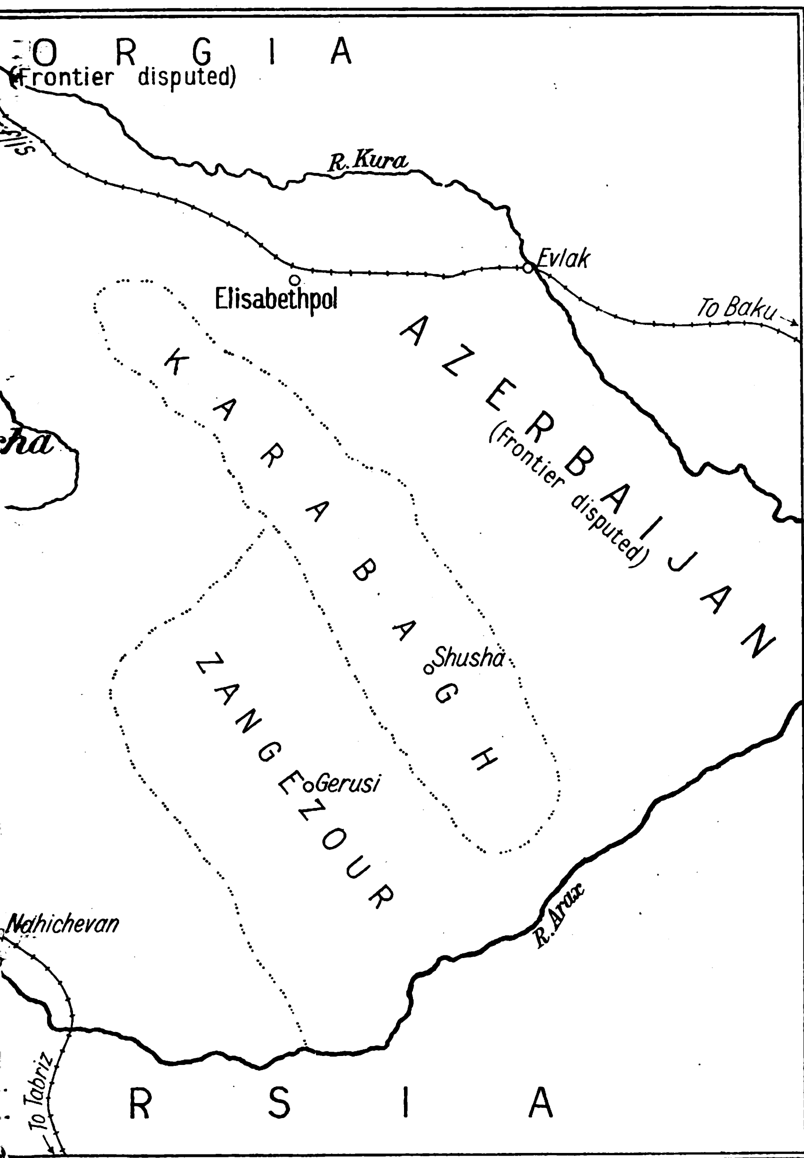

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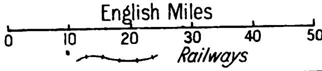
NORTH EAST
ARMENIA
APRIL 1920



To Tiflis
G E
Alexandropol
Kars
(Railway to Batum projected)
Lake
Gok
R. Arax
Kagizman
Bridge
Bridge
ZANGIBAZAR
Erivan
Echmiadzin
Kamarlu
FRONT
Igdir
FRONT
Beyuk
Bridge
TURKEY
(Frontier with Armenia undefined)
Bayazid
R. Arax
P E

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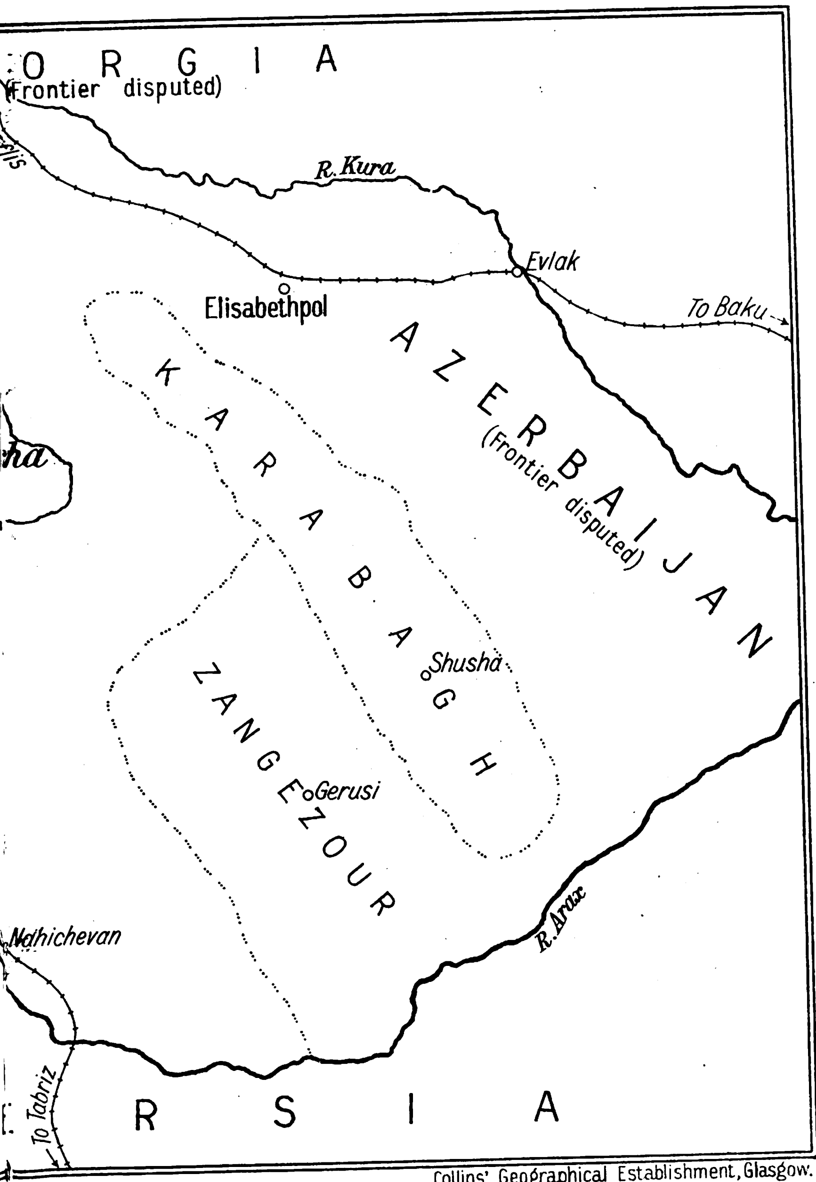

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snow-clad slopes rise up into the clouds. Beneath it fighting is going on at this moment. The Tartars and the Armenians are fighting only a few miles out of Erivan, the present capital of Armenia! And along the railway we see the marks of recent war. The Turks came to within twelve miles of Erivan in 1918; at all the stations on the line, and in the surrounding villages, not a house remains whole, except, sometimes, a solitary building, remarkable by contrast with the rest, where the Turkish commander himself was staying. The villages are masses of rubble; the stations wildernesses. Everywhere there is desolation, except where, among the ruins, new inhabitants are sheltering in misery.

'What could be more symbolical of Armenia's agony than this approach to her capital?'

As a town Erivan has few charms. A long main street, along the uneven surface of which run the rails of a tramway that is no longer in action; a small 'boulevard' and a bandstand around the Russian Church; a straggling market place; no buildings of any importance, but many in ruins; some Armenian churches and Tartar mosques, some of them pleasing; a thousand small houses; and unlimited dust or mud, according to the weather—this is the general aspect of Erivan from the inside. It is too big for a village, but too chaotic to pass for a town. Owing to the troubled times that it has gone through during the last years, its decaying streets and houses have not been repaired. The 'liberated' Russian armies of 1917 did a vast amount of damage and laid many parts of the place in ruins. The roads are barely tolerable for motor traffic; and in fact

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there were practically no motor cars. The Government had not more than three or four at its disposal when I was there; the American relief workers had a few more, but not many. A few 'phætons' plied in the streets; but I never saw any one hiring them—perhaps they were all requisitioned by the Government. A couple of bicycles sometimes appeared in the main street. The most prominent vehicles were ox-carts and camel-carts. When the band played in the boulevard, as it sometimes did, a few hundred inhabitants strolled up and down listening to it When it stopped they added the main street to their itinerary. The shops and booths were practically empty, except for odd parcels of goods that for some strange reason or other had been brought down there for sale. Altogether Erivan from the inside was an uninspiring picture.

From outside, however, a different criticism was to be made. There is a range of hills immediately to the north of the town, and from the road that mounts these one obtains a delightful view. One sees Erivan's straggling streets and towers in the foreground; the vast plain on either side, broken by little hills; and all round in the distance the snow-mountains, with the magnificent Ararat towering up into the sky. After rain, when the air is clear and the mountains are free of clouds, there are few sights in the world that can compare with Mt. Ararat and Little Ararat, and 'Wonderful Eyes,' called 'the bride of Ararat,' on the opposite side of the plain.

As I looked over the broad expanse of the plain,

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the various fronts could easily be picked out. That range of hills over there, for instance, was the Igdir front, where General Sebo was holding the Kurds at bay. Farther to the left, almost directly pointing towards Ararat, over the winding course of the Arax River, was the Kamarloo front. There the enemy was the Tartar, supported, of course, by Turkish auxiliaries and excited by their agents. Far away in the East is the way to Nahichevan, which was in the possession of the enemy. Still farther east are the Karabagh and Zangezour mountain districts, where Armenians and Tartars were once more at each other's throats. If Noah's Ark were to rest once more on Ararat, one can imagine no part of the world less likely to provide olive branches, actual and figurative, than this desolated and war-racked country.

There was no need to look far afield for the scenes of the conflict. Within five miles of Erivan itself, there commences the Zangibazar zone of Tartar villages, which refused to acknowledge the Armenian Government. This score or so of Tartar villages was guarded by Tartar patrols and no Armenian troops or officials were allowed to enter them. Fortunately, the Armenians held the two bridges across the Arax River, that join this district with the other bank, and they had the third under the fire of their artillery. Otherwise Turkish guns would long since have been brought in to support the rebels. There were Turkish officers and soldiers in the villages, but as the Armenians had not attempted to attack them, no

fighting had taken place there. The Armenians guarded the outside of the district; the Tartars held fast to the inside. And thus a hostile dagger was pointed straight at the heart of the young Armenian republic. A hostile zone within five miles of one's capital is enough to unsettle any one, especially when it happens to cross the only railway line that was still working, the Erivan-Tiflis line.

It was useless to hope to find a hotel in Erivan, where there were about ten times as many people as had ever been before, so I took advantage of an introduction given me by my kind friend, Mr Stevens, the British Consul at Batum—(the most popular man in all Batum, may I remark, and the Englishman best acquainted with Transcaucasian conditions)—and called upon Captain Gracey, D.S.O., the British representative in Armenia. Captain Gracey at once invited me to stay at his house, and I thus had the opportunity to study Armenian conditions to the best advantage and to make the close acquaintance of this remarkable man. Captain Gracey (who, like Mr Stevens, is an Irishman) has had, I believe, sixteen years' experience of the Middle East in Turkey, Armenia, and the Caucasus. He speaks Turkish perfectly, Armenian well, and several other local languages fairly. I could go on for a long time with a recital of his various feats during the war, which culminated with nine terrible months in a Bolshevik jail at Moscow, but I will mention only the most remarkable. At a time when only Erivan was out of the hands of the victorious Turks, Captain

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Gracey travelled in a motor-car right through the most hostile parts of the Tartar zones in Armenia, disguised as a Tartar, who was the chief mischief-maker among the Mohammedans in the Trans-caucasus. His business was to ascertain how a certain column of Armenian refugees was progressing on its way to safety, and it was thanks to his extraordinary bravery and cleverness that thousands of these unfortunates were saved. Gracey knows the Armenians as does no other Englishman. His faith in the Armenians is based on deep comprehension and sympathy, but he is always so fair in his statements about conditions in Armenia that nobody can fairly discount his reports as weighted with pro-Armenian bias. It remains only to be said that the British Government set him down in Armenia without even a secretary or a means of conveyance, while even such people as the Azerbaijan Republic representative had a motor-car and a big staff. In spite of these official handicaps and the worse drawbacks of an ignorant home policy that seemed to be definitely anti-Armenian in tendency, Gracey managed to keep the people of Armenia friendly, and more than friendly, to the Allies at a time when treachery would have been well repaid.[1]

There were only three Englishmen in Erivan when I arrived—Captain Gracey, the diplomatic representative; Captain Court, the liaison officer; and a third, employed by the American Near East

[1] The arrival of Colonel Stokes in the late autumn of 1920 marked a further step in anti-Armenian policy at home. Gracey went home on sick leave, and was promptly relieved of his duties.

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Relief Committee. Court had just been ordered to give up his post, because, as I heard suggested in several quarters, he had not sufficiently abused the Armenians in his reports, this last being the only policy that recommended itself to our authorities at Constantinople and Tiflis. Apparently prejudice was thought there to be more reliable than first-hand knowledge. Yet every British officer who has been in Armenia—they are not many, it is true, since no Allied force has ever been stationed in Armenia—has come away full of sympathy and good feeling towards the Armenians. Not that the Armenians, like the Georgians and Tartars, tried to capture their support by lavish professions of respect and hypocritical friendship; on the contrary, the Armenians, grimly occupied with their own troubles, invariably left the British visitor, official or civilian, to draw his own conclusions. Nevertheless, in every case, I repeat, the result was very satisfactory from the Armenian point of view; except that nobody in England seemed to care two pins that the Armenians were our Allies, had fought at our side and had lost nearly everything by it. The British Government gave pledges to the Armenians[1]; and

[1] I will mention only a few official statements that were made, not during the War, but *after the Turkish armistice.*

The Earl of Crawford, speaking for the Government, said in the House of Lords on November 13, 1918: 'His Majesty's Government are fully alive to the gravity of the national and humanitarian interests involved, and are determined to spare no efforts to secure full satisfaction for the rightful claims of Armenia.'

Mr Balfour (Foreign Secretary), in the House of Commons on November 6, 1918: 'As regards Armenia, it will, perhaps, suffice to say that we have always regarded the freeing of the Armenians from Turkish misrule as an important part of our Middle Eastern

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now it is breaking them. On July 27, 1920, Mr Bonar Law announced to the House of Commons that he did not think that England had made more promises to the Armenians than had our Allies, such as America;[1] this was apparently equivalent to saying that we need not, therefore, concern ourselves to keep our promises! Nor are we doing so. But we must remember that our much-professed friendship drew thousands of Armenians all over the world into the armies of the Allies at the outbreak of the war and that it has immeasurably embittered their enemies against them. The true estimate, I am told, of Armenian losses during the war, both in actual fighting and as a result of Turkish, Tartar, and Kurdish massacres, is that one million men, women, and children perished out of the four million Armenians who were alive in 1914. A quarter of a whole people has died in six years and the end of its agony is not yet in sight.

I intended, while I was in Erivan, to try to see

policy, and that we confidently look forward to its accomplishment.'

Lord Robert Cecil (Foreign Under-Secretary), in the House of Commons on November 18, 1918: 'As far as I am concerned, and I believe in this matter I am speaking for the Government, I should be deeply disappointed if any shred or shadow of Turkish government was left in Armenia.'

These definite statements were repeatedly endorsed by members of the Government.

[1] 'Lord Robert Cecil asked whether, in view of the anxiety which existed in many quarters, the Right Honourable gentleman [Mr Bonar Law] could hold out no hope at all that we should be able to fulfil the repeated pledges we had given to the Armenians.

'Mr Bonar Law: "I do not think we have given any more pledges than other countries, for instance, America. We cannot go beyond our responsibilities.' " (*Times* report.)

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us to purchase one in Europe; he undertook to help us to obtain it. Well, we bought two in Paris, and they have duly arrived in Batum; but the British authorities at Constantinople will not allow them to be sent along to us. Why? We don't know, and we don't understand.

'We are fighting the Tartars, the Turks, and the Kurds, and now the Bolshevists are coming on the scene. We have no real Bolsheviks in Armenia, but the peril from outside is increasing. Yesterday, for example, we lost four or five officers and some sixty men against the Tartars and Turks. This is a big drain. We want to get busy arranging our internal economy, not to be fighting the Turks. But our army is not well enough equipped to put a stop to the attacks upon us. The men are strong and firm, but they are badly clothed and armed. The Americans are helping to feed and clothe us. So did the English when they were in the Caucasus last year; after they left in August, the Italians were to come to occupy the Transcaucasus, but they did not. And so we have been left to our fate. We have no way out to the sea, and are cut off from the world except by the railway that Georgia controls.'

Dr Khatissian asked when Armenia's boundaries were to be fixed. 'Every day we expect to hear that the Supreme Council has fixed our boundaries and that we can get to work. If there were only two hundred British troops here, there would be no war! But as things are, the influence and prestige of Europe are daily growing less in these parts. The fact that Constantinople is now

occupied by the Allies is absolutely not felt by the Turks and their allies here. Nor will anybody be affected by the presence of the three Allied battalions who are, it is said, to be stationed at Batum. No; Erzerum, Trebizond, Bayazid, and Van ought to be occupied by small forces of European troops. Then the roads from Erzerum to Trebizond and from Kars to Batum and into the interior of Armenia would be open.'

I asked the President about Batum, and before he answered he took me to a contour map of the Transcaucasus. 'You will see from this,' he said, 'that the country immediately behind Trebizond is so mountainous that any railway communication to the interior will have to be tunnelled. Now that is a big undertaking, not to be thought of by us for twenty or thirty years. Meanwhile, as you know, the projected railway route from Trebizond to the interior to Armenia runs along the coast from Trebizond to Batum and only then branches off inland to Kars. So, clearly, for the next thirty years—until the railway at Trebizond is tunnelled, if that ever comes about—Batum is the key to communications between Armenia and Europe. Don't think that, like our neighbours, we want to claim Batum for ourselves alone. We know that Batum serves too many countries to be safely entrusted to the control of any one of them. But what we need is unhindered egress to the sea there. If we could be given the southern side of the port, we should be quite contented. The rest would remain for the other peoples who need it. The route from Batum to Armenia could then proceed

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by way of Kars along the Artvin Valley, in which the villages are all predominantly Armenian. If, however, it is impracticable to split up the port into two zones, then let it remain, as it is now, as an international *porto franco*. That solution also perfectly satisfies the needs of Armenia.'

As I left the President's study, I ran against a short, dark man who was entering. He was, I learned, the 'power behind the throne' in Armenia, the redoubtable General 'Dro,' one of the heads of the famous Armenian revolutionary secret society, the Dashnakzutiun. In pre-Revolutionary days he had assassinated more than one Russian official with his own hands, the best-known being Prince Nakashidze, the Governor of Baku, whom he killed in the street with a bomb in 1905. I shall have more to say about 'Dro'—he has retained this pseudonym from the old days. That I should have met him on the threshold of the President's cabinet seemed to me to be at least symbolical.

From the President I went across the road to the War Office. The houses in which these various departments were housed appeared to be old law-courts and offices of the Russian régime, none too well fitted for their new functions. I asked to see General Araratov, the War Minister. An old artillery expert in the Russian army, he was attached to the Rumanians when the Russian Revolution broke out. When the Bolshevists took power, he, like so many other Russian-Armenians, remembered his country and went back to the

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Caucasus to serve her.[1] You could not mistake the General for anything but what he was—a jolly and honest soldier, and, I am sure, a most efficient one. It was notorious in Erivan that the atmosphere of politics was anything but agreeable to him; and that he was anxious to leave it, if he could do so without failing in his duty to Armenia.

I asked him how things stood with Armenia.

'It's very difficult,' he said, 'to be precise in trying to give you an idea of the present condition of affairs in Armenia. What I would say of our people is that it is one on which you can build. And that is more than can be said about some of our neighbours. But at present we are very tired. For three summers now we have been holding the Turkish frontier, which before the War the Russians used regularly to send special Cossack and other forces to guard. The Kurds have already

[1] Anti-Armenian propagandists in the Caucasus repeatedly assured me that the Armenians had a secret treaty with General Denikin, and that, moreover, numerous of his staff officers were with the Armenian armies, manipulating them in his interests. I imagine that the presence of Armenian officers of the type of Araratov, who spoke no Armenian and were old Russian officers, was one cause of these rumours. There were also a certain small number of entirely Russian officers, who did not wish to serve under Denikin, but, desiring work, were glad to serve under the Armenian Republic, which alone among the Transcaucasian republics behaved towards Russians with sense and decency. The agreement between Armenia and General Denikin was, I am informed on good authority, nothing more serious than an arrangement for the mutual exchange of rifles and ammunition. The Armenians had a supply of cartridges which were useless for their rifles, but which Denikin needed; the opposite was the case with the Volunteers. Therefore, having no quarrel, they exchanged munitions according to their respective needs. Why it should be considered criminal of the Armenians to remain friendly with the Russians, a people to whom (like the rest of the Caucasus) they owe so much, I leave to Tiflis and Constantinople to explain.

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begun their attacks on our villages; and as soon as the snows are melted, we shall be up against it again.'

He did not try to show things better than they really were.

'We have called up everybody from the ages of twenty to twenty-five and more; in fact, everyone, practically, we can get hold of between twenty and thirty, or even thirty-two, is in the army, unless they are engaged on some other Government service. Desertion is rife. Of course it is; what can you expect? Still, I would say that our army has a minimum strength of about 20,000. Some of the men are very good; others are not of much use, and the recent epidemic of influenza has carried off thousands of them.'

General Araratov went out of his way to praise the work of the British officers who had been with the Armenian forces during the British occupation of the Transcaucasus, though he complained of the inconsistencies of our policy in regard to Armenia.

I asked the General what he thought of the neutralisation of Batum. He replied that it was a solution that satisfied Armenia's needs. Had Batum been handed over to any one of the other Transcaucasian nations, this would have been the last straw for the Armenian Republic, which could hardly have survived. To another question of mine, General Araratov said that Armenia would regard Russia in the future with cautious but not unfriendly eyes. He reminded me that, among the Caucasian republics, the Armenians alone had

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almost unclad. They have no rifles for their cartridges and no cartridges for their rifles. Consequently, desertion is heavy. After all, how are we to know who are soldiers and who aren't, when a great part of our army is not even in uniform? The only thing they have is boots. When I walk through the streets here, I don't know who are my soldiers until they salute. As for those who don't salute, I can't be always looking at their boots to see if they are soldiers.

'Everybody knows what is going on in this part of the world. The Bolshevists and the Turks are trying to unite against the British in Persia and India. Well, they are already beginning to show their hand. The Turks at Erzerum will soon, I suppose, advance upon Kars. And the Bolsheviks also are beginning to move southward.'

He shrugged his shoulders. 'When is it all going to end? When are we going to have peace again? I am an old man, but for the sake of the young men I should like to see peace again in my time!'

It only took two hours by car next day to the Igdir front. Our party consisted of an American Red Cross officer, whose car it was, Captain Gracey, and myself. On the way out we passed the spiritual centre of Armenia, the village of Echmiadzin, where the Katholikos, the Pope of all the Armenians, resides. I asked Captain Gracey if he would try to get me an interview with the Katholikos, and he said he would do his best. All the way from Echmiadzin to Igdir there was a monotonous trail of gutted villages. The

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mudhouses had fallen in; the fields were untilled; everywhere were waste and destruction. There were both Armenian and Tartar villages; but, naturally, the Armenian villages had suffered more. During the Tartar and Turkish invasions only the Armenian villages were molested. And when the Armenians drove out the invaders, they naturally preferred to drive out the men rather than ruin their own country by destroying villages. However, there were frequent cases where Armenian villagers, returning to their ruined homes, had taken a terrible revenge upon the nearest Tartar villages. But it would be absolutely untrue to say that the Armenians were equally to blame with the Tartars. They were not so either in intention or action. Any one who has been in the disputed territories can see with his own eyes that for every Tartar village destroyed by Armenians, often in revenge for massacres, at least half a dozen Armenian villages have been ruined by the invaders. The relative strengths of the Turks and the struggling Armenian State show too well who was likely to be the aggressor.

We ran into Igdir at last, a fairly large village, which still retained a semblance of life. In front of a modest house we were met by a body of soldiers with a band. A man came out to greet us who would have attracted attention under any circumstances. He was dressed in a semi-military suit, with a Cossack hat. Bright blue eyes, a drooping moustache, and a great mane of hair, a welcoming smile—it was Sebo, the famous guerilla leader, the friend and colleague of Andranik.

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Twenty-five years ago Sebo was a shoemaker in a village near Erzinjan, in Eastern Anatolia. One day a body of Turkish troops descended on the village, massacring and ravishing the Armenians in it. For some reason or other, Sebo himself was spared; but he saw his brothers and sisters tortured to death before his eyes. It must be remembered that they had committed no crime to call down this treatment from their Turkish rulers. When the Turks left the village, Sebo, then a boy of twenty, swore an oath to kill every Turk he set his eyes on, as an enemy to the Armenian people. He took to the hills, and, collecting a band of homeless fellow-countrymen round him, he soon proved to be a natural guerilla genius. He became famous for his exploits around Mush and Erzinjan against the Turks. Now that Armenia had become a nation again, he was serving in its army against his former enemies and their tools, the Kurds and Tartars. On August 19th, 1920, he told me, it would be twenty-five years since he began to fight the Turks.

He greeted Gracey cordially, who was an old friend. He invited us into his quarters, where we drank local cognac and ate eggs, cheese, and bread. Sebo apologised for the poor fare, which was only to be expected. He had little Russian, and most of the conversation was in Turkish, Gracey acting as interpreter.

He showed us his positions on a map.

'Only local troops can serve on this front,' he said. 'If we bring men down from Erivan, they fall sick at once with malaria and influenza.'

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where all Sebo's artillery—two small guns—were posted; and were introduced by him to some young Armenian officers who had seen service in the Great War in the Russian armies; there were some also who had served as conscripts in the Turkish army. A group of civilians came round a bend in the mud walls. Sebo stopped them and exhorted them to stand and help to defend their village to the last against the enemy. The men listened, hat in hand, and promised to stand firm.

We walked through the post, which, like all the places under Sebo's care, was scrupulously clean. I noticed that the words of command were given in Russian, which, by the way, is the official language of the Armenian War Office; most of the soldiers had served in the Russian armies, often on the German front. These Armenians were fine, tall, upstanding men. I have never seen a set of men of finer physique. Many of them were volunteers.

As we rode back to our car, we tried to encourage Sebo with the hope of aid from the Allies. He smiled sadly and said: 'For twenty years I have heard that the Allies are going to help the Armenian people. But you have only helped us—to become a million less!'

This he said without a trace of malice, but in the spirit of one who from bitter experience had lost all hope in our promises. I have heard it said that the Armenians are an ungrateful people; but it is difficult to see what they have to be grateful for.

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During the next few days, I made what inquiries I could into the political situation at Erivan. Needless to say, it was not a very satisfactory spectacle. Practically the whole administration was in the hands of the 'Dashnaks,' as they were popularly called. The Dashnakzutiun party, as I have said, is the famous Armenian patriotic secret society, founded forty years ago to fight Turkish and Russian oppression with all weapons, including terrorism. In 1905 the Dashnakzutiun—the word, by the way, means 'Federation' or 'Allies'—came into line with the Socialist programmes of the Russian Revolutionary parties. Party discipline is strong, and, consequently, every Dashnak was supposed to be a Socialist. Needless to say, this is very far from being the case. There are as many divisions inside the Dashnak party to-day as there can be. But in one thing they have all been united : at a time when the Armenian people was scattered helplessly all over the world, the Dashnaks brought back to it the hope of becoming a nation again. In this way the party may claim to have made possible the independence of Armenia. But, now that in theory at least, and to some extent in fact, this independence had been achieved, it seemed as if the real task of the party had been outlived. Indeed, such men as Andranik severed their connection with it as soon as Armenia became independent. If all had gone well and was going well with the young Armenian republic, one might have expected to see the party split up into its various parts, non-Socialist and Socialist, and

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thus cease to exist as a single and predominant force in Armenian politics. Unfortunately, conditions have been anything but settled, and the Dashnaks could justify their continued activity.

There is no other Armenian party with an organisation comparable with that of the Dashnaks. A few parties exist, but they cannot put forward, under present conditions, any programme that can compete in the popular eye with that of the Dashnaks. The latter are everywhere; in camp, field, village, and office. The strong men among them—Dro, for instance—practically dictated the policy of the Government. When I was in Erivan, it was everywhere said that Dr Khatissian, the president, was too moderate a man for the Dashnaks, and that he would have to go; and, sure enough, a few weeks afterwards he resigned, and a well-known Dashnak took his place.[1] There is no doubt that all non-party Armenians, and even the moderate section—probably a majority—in the Dashnak party itself, wished to see a coalition Government in power, uniting all the best Armenian elements. But everything played into the extremist Dashnaks' hands. Everything called for the rule of a strongly nationalist party. The results, of course, were bad. The Government had to offer all its posts to party men; and it dared not proceed against them, if they were unworthy of their trust. The moderates were driven out of the Government, and even forced to leave the country. People I spoke to in Erivan on this subject said that Andranik himself

[1] On May 5, 1920, Dr Ohandjanian became President.

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was virtually an exile from Armenia. Since he had left the party, they declared, his life would not be safe from the vengeance of the party leaders. Another evil result of the Dashnak predominance in the Government was that it retaliated upon Turk and Tartar aggression with methods as violent as its enemies', even when milder methods might often be more effective. You cannot persuade a party of frenzied nationalists that two blacks do not make a white; consequently, no day went by without a catalogue of complaints from both sides, Armenian and Tartar, of unprovoked attacks, murders, village burnings, and the like.

Superficially, the situation was a series of vicious circles. Tartar and Armenian attacked and retaliated for attacks. Fear drove on each side to fresh excesses. The Turk easily excited the Tartar and Kurds to fresh invasions of Armenia, and the Dashnaks drove on their countrymen to revenge themselves in kind. The Dashnaks remained in power because conditions were such as they were; and conditions were such as they were to no small extent because the Dashnaks were in power. There was only one way to cut the knot. *It was to define Armenia's borders and to have these recognised* by her neighbours. Once the Armenian republic had its settled frontiers, Mohammedan villagers inside and Armenian villagers outside would be able to change places—the acknowledged only certain remedy for the strife in these parts—or both parties would accept their new rulers in peace. Then, with the cessation of

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picturesque road up and down little rises in the country, until all of a sudden a tremendous storm of rain and hail burst upon us. Human flesh and clothes could not stand against it, and, after a few minutes, we abandoned the car and rushed into an adjacent vineyard. In a rather dilapidated barn we found the owner and a party of friends making merry with a teapot, full of his wine, and a single glass. The teapot was an enormous enamel vessel, and held such a quantity that all of us, including our driver and the owner's groom, had a couple of glasses of the delicious stuff. This was a new revelation of Armenia for me; it was clear that the good-fellowship of the rest of the Caucasus is not absent in Armenia too when it has an opportunity to show itself.

The storm abated, and we set off again towards Echmiadzin. The amazing bulk of white Ararat showed very clearly after the rain, and for the first time for some days we were able to see its summit. It is so vast a mass that I cannot describe it, except to say that, no matter where you look at it from the Armenian plain, it always seems to stretch three-quarters of the way to the sky.

Echmiadzin is the spot where, according to Armenian tradition, the Saviour appeared to St Gregory, at the beginning of the fourth century, and ordered him to found a church. The Armenian popes, or 'Katholikoi,' have lived at Echmiadzin since the end of the fourth century. They are elected by all the Armenians throughout the world, and have more authority than any

other Armenian over the people. They are at once the spiritual and the political head, the latter chiefly, of course, because for so long no stable Armenian secular government has existed.

Their residence seems all the more beautiful for being in the midst of the now desolated Armenian plain. Before the Erivan Road reaches it you pass one or two ancient churches, very small and characteristically Armenian in structure; then you traverse a straggling village, and come at last to a collection of two-storied buildings built round a cathedral. In one of the houses the Katholikos himself lives; others are the monastery, attached to the cathedral, and a fine library of ancient texts and a museum of objects of local interest. Inasmuch as many of the Katholikoi have taken part in political movements, some of the souvenirs of their activity have a peculiar interest. We crossed the broad courtyard that surrounds the cathedral, and waited outside the house of the Katholikos while we ascertained if he would receive us.

We were invited to enter, and were taken to a long room, full of sunshine and carpets. A dignified old man was sitting at a table; on his head was the strange square hat that showed him to be the Katholikos. We kissed his hand, and he asked an Armenian who was with us to interpret for us. But the latter said that I knew Russian, and in this language he spoke to us. He asked us how we found Armenia, and, to our reply, said that at least the American and British relief workers had done much to improve matters.

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'They have done a great work in feeding our orphans and hungry people, and we are deeply grateful to them.'

I asked a few questions.

'Give us peace and our frontiers,' he said, 'and in ten years you will not recognise our people! What else can you expect now but disorder? Our people have been and are being robbed, ravished, and murdered. Our Government is peaceful; it seeks only to defend us; but, even so, it cannot avoid war. You, in the West, are beginning now to know what a cynical, what an evil foe you have to deal with in the Turk. Many people defend him; but they do not know him as we do. Give us peace and our frontiers, and our Government will be peaceful. In my sermons I have always preached that the Armenians should live in a friendly way, like brothers, with the other races within our borders. We do not want to fight. We want peace, activity, and security.

'We are very grateful to our friends in the West—very grateful. We look only for one more kind word. Only give us justice; give us what is ours and nothing more. We are very grateful to you.'

The audience lasted, perhaps, half an hour, but these were his salient remarks. We were moved by the energy and courage of this man, whose face was marked with much suffering for his people. He is the most inspiring figure in contemporary Armenian life. If Armenia weathers the storm of the next few years, it will be largely his doing.

During the next few days I went round some of the refugee camps in Erivan. There are

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hundreds of thousands of refugees from Van and the mountains scattered in this neighbourhood, many of them in the city itself. Many of them, men, women, and children, were brought there in the last stages of starvation. Their faces were so thin that, looking at them from the front, you could hardly distinguish their features; it was only in profile that you saw them properly. The children, especially, looked awful; you saw the wizened face of an old woman on a child of four or five. Yet, in other parts of the camp, you saw refugees who had been in as bad a plight a few weeks before, but who were now well on the way to attaining the astounding health that seemed the good fortune of all who stay sufficiently long in the care of the missions. It was pathetic to see Dr Usher, the American missionary doctor, going his rounds among the patients in the hospitals. His name was called from every side; women seized his hand and pressed it to their lips; children screamed with excitement until he acknowledged them. For, besides his wonderful work in the Erivan hospitals, Dr Usher is a national hero in Armenia. It was he who was one of the leaders of the heroic defence of Van in 1915, when the Armenian inhabitants, without proper weapons or supplies, withstood the siege of a Turkish army that was determined to lay waste the town. In those terrible days, both Dr Usher and his wife went under with typhus. The doctor got well—as well as one ever gets after a bad attack of typhus—but Mrs Usher died. But he still carries on his work among the hungry and

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the suffering—one of the finest men in the world.

He told me one day at dinner a story which seemed to him characteristic of the Armenian as he is and as he has developed under Turkish oppression. Soon after he first arrived in Armenia from America, he saw a little Turkish gendarme beating a huge Armenian shepherd who, though large enough to crush his persecutor almost between finger and thumb, made no movement to defend himself. (Most Armenians, by the way, especially the peasants, are big men, contrary to common supposition.) The next day this cowardly shepherd was out with his flock when it was attacked by a bear. The Armenian had only a wooden club for a weapon, but he attacked the bear fearlessly, and so astonished and battered the animal that it at last tried to escape. But the shepherd jumped on its back, hitting away at its head with his club; it actually crossed a river with him still upon it, until at last it fell dead on the other bank. Dr Usher afterwards realised why the shepherd had accepted the Turkish gendarme's beating so quietly. Had he protested, by word or act, he would have been in danger of arrest or worse, together with his family and all the other Armenians in the neighbourhood. Consequently, seeing that no one suffered by the beating but himself, he had kept quiet. But he could not allow mere bears to molest his flock!

Dr Usher does not claim for the Armenians virtues that they have not generally got and cannot have after their centuries of oppression under

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CHAPTER X

BAKU: THE BOLSHEVISTS ARRIVE

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CHAPTER X

BAKU: THE BOLSHEVISTS ARRIVE

AFTER a short interval amidst the frivolities of Tiflis, I went off one day to Baku. There was the usual insolence of the Georgian customs officers, delighted at a chance to worry an Englishman, to contend with at the frontier; but soon we were in Tartar territory. The train was full of Armenian merchants and Tartars travelling on a variety of affairs. Some of the latter were rather quaint. They would stand, one by one, at the entrance to the compartment in which I was, in order to enjoy the absorbing spectacle of a European in shirt-sleeves. I had to push them aside, after they had had a few minutes' watch, in order to give the others a turn. Our train dawdled along at the average Transcaucasian rate, and we had plenty of time to stretch our legs at the stations. At one of these I read an announcement that special classes for men wishing to become railway officials would be held at such and such a time, but that Mohammedans only would be admitted. We reached Baku at last, and, by the kindness of the British representatives there, I was allowed to stay in the flat of an English gentleman, engaged in the oil industry, Mr John Walton, the brother of the British Vice-Consul at Rostov. This was in the middle of April. At the end of

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the month Mr Walton and all the other Britishers in Baku were imprisoned by the Bolshevists.[1]

When I arrived, the question on everybody's lips was, 'Will the Bolshevists come in?' The panic flight of General Denikin's forces, and the occupation of Petrovsk and Derbent by the Bolshevists, or by the semi-Bolshevist bands of the Dagheston "Mountain Republic," had brought the Bolshevist peril right to the door of Azerbaijan. That some day or other the Bolshevists would endeavour to occupy Baku was doubted by nobody; the prize was too great for them to resist the temptation. On the other hand, the Bolshevists' immediate need of Baku oil for their transport was so great that they might be content, for the time being, with an arrangement with the Tartar government, rather than risk the disorganisation, and even temporary ruin, of the oil production which might easily be the result of an armed attack upon Baku. Again, it was suggested that the Bolshevists were unwilling to compromise their prestige in the East by coming to blows with Azerbaijan, the first Mohammedan republic in the world's history. There were already hundreds of Bolshevist envoys in the town, all well provided with funds. It is true that the Government were doing their best to encourage the Russian workmen to leave, even to the provision of passage money. But the Bolshevists were cleverer at these games than the Azerbaijan Government, and, sooner or later, one had to expect to find the

[1] They were kept in prison for six months, and only released after protracted negotiations in November, 1920, in exchange for some Bolshevists in British hands.

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Baku proletariat primed to insist upon the arrival of the Bolshevists. Whether this moment would come at once, or soon, or not before the winter, or not for the whole year, it was impossible to say; and, consequently, everybody's nerves were on edge.

Baku politics were curious in their origin and development. When, in May, 1918, the Trans-caucasian Diet dissolved into three Republican governments—Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan—the Azerbaijan section returned to Baku, via Elisavetpol, and, adding to its numbers in proportion to the strength of the parties originally represented in it, declared itself the elected Parliament of the inhabitants of Azerbaijan. Since then, I was informed, no new elections had been held. The Parliament had, consequently, a very shaky constitutional basis, and the minorities in it were demanding its dissolution and the holding of regular elections.

This was especially the case now that the Coalition Government had broken up and 'Mussavat,' the leading party, was thinking seriously of taking the whole cabinet into its own hands. 'Mussavat'—the word means 'Equality'—represented the Tartar bourgeoisie of Azerbaijan. Its members were the Khans and Beks, *i.e.* princes and nobles; they were the merchant millionaires of Baku and the big landowners of the province. Their programme was nominally democratic, and stood also for the independence of Azerbaijan from both Russia and Turkey. Needless to say, many of the party were really of what was known as the 'Russian orientation'; that is to say, they would

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welcome a return on certain conditions to Russia. But, just as in Georgia, this orientation was not publicly proclaimed, both because it did not sound sufficiently advanced, and because, at present, Russia does not exist, except in the guise of the Bolshevists. And, of course, there was a new bureaucracy, very keen for independence.

The reader may be reminded at this point that Azerbaijan has no historical pedigree, except, perhaps, as a Tartar Khanate centuries ago. The new State was an artificial thing, based on the presence of the oil wells.

The rival party, 'Ittihad'—'Unity'—was, on the other hand, a definitely pan-Islamist, pro-Turk and pro-Bolshevist organisation. An extraordinary leading article in its Russian periodical, also called 'Ittihad,' of April 4th, 1920, showed the line it was taking to oppose 'Mussavat' and seize power. The article led off with the declaration that the 'Turkish peoples,' who for so many centuries have suffered from the assaults of Russian Tsarism and European imperialism and capitalism, had now to choose between death and liberty; Europe, *i.e.* the Allies, was set upon crushing the Mohammedan peoples of Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Persia, in order to secure absolute mastery over the Mohammedan world.

The latest acts of the Entente—the occupation and murders at Stamboul, the giving to Armenia of the six vilayets, and to the Greeks of Smyrna, the setting on of the Armenian Dashnaks against us—fully demonstrate this truth.

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But the success of the Bolshevists against 'the whole counter-revolutionary world' showed that everything was not lost. 'Lenin and his friends, the prophets of the age,' had proved that the weapons of imperialism could be turned against it. The writer went on to demand

an immediate alliance with the Red Army, which is holding out to the East the hand of brotherly aid, the mobilisation of all our forces, the renunciation of petty interests on the part of the bourgeois classes, the complete unity of the national front; the declaration of war upon the Entente and its dependants, and the organisation of a rising against it everywhere possible.

Azerbaijan, he continued, was in the responsible and fortunate position of being the bridge between Red Russia and the Mohammedan East.

The revolutionary Mohammedan world, supported by Red Russia, will easily cast off from itself the yoke of oppression and slavery.

The 'Ittihad' party, he said, had long since stood on this platform. The Bolshevists were coming to Azerbaijan 'not as enemies, but as sincere friends,' and 'Ittihad' regretted alleged recent repressions of the local Bolshevists. But that, of course, was the wicked work of the 'Mussavat' Government, which ought to realise that its day was past and make room for

another Government which better understands the significance of the age and the moment, and is able to

unite the people around the motto of 'an independent Azerbaijan alliance with Soviet Russia in contact with the Turkish democracy and the revolution in the East.'

The writer wound up with a slashing attack upon 'Mussavat' as agents of the Allies and friends of the Armenians! 'These blind and criminal agents of the Entente' were leading the country to ruin. The rest of the paper was devoted to attacks upon the 'Mussavat' Government and all its works and representatives, and upon the wicked imperialists and capitalists of Europe who are oppressing poor democratic Turkey.

The policy of 'Ittihad' was clear, and as dangerous as it was designedly popular. Turkish and pan-Islamist propaganda was rife in Azerbaijan. The portrait or statuette of Enver Pasha was a common ornament of the shop-windows, and German money was said to be suspiciously abundant in the money-market of Baku.

There were Socialist groups also (Socialist-Revolutionary and Menshevist) in the Parliament, as well as non-party men and a few Armenian delegates, but the chief fight was between 'Mussavat' and 'Ittihad.' It was not then known for certain whether the 'Mussavat' Government would have sufficient confidence in its own strength to take strong measures against 'Ittihad' and close the latter's papers. It promised to do so; but the papers re-appeared after Easter, after their suppression had been publicly announced, and the explanation of the Government that the ban had been removed because there was freedom of speech

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in Azerbaijan, was generally considered very lame. However, strong measures were promised against the 'Ittihad' party, as also against the local Bolshevists, as soon as conditions were more favourable for such action; but it was not evident when things were going to be easier. 'Ittihad' was spoiling for a row; the intentions of the Bolshevists were wrapped in mystery; the Baku Armenians were thoroughly miserable under Tartar rule; and prices were rising to unheard-of heights. Everything was ripe for trouble, and Baku was not the time or place for storm-clouds to blow harmlessly by.

One morning I had an hour's conversation with M. Ussubekov, the President of the Azerbaijan Republic. Any notions that unsophisticated readers might have of the appearance and nature of President of a Tartar republic would probably go far astray of the truth. In looks, manners, and conversation, M. Ussubekov seemed a typical member of the Russian professional classes. Probably, like most of his colleagues, he received his education and professional training in Russia, and it was only force of circumstances that had brought him to the front as a Tartar statesman. He was still a youngish man, and gave the impression of energy and ability.

I asked him, first, his opinion of the future relations of Azerbaijan with Russia, from which it broke away only in May, 1918.

'For a long time,' the President replied, 'Russia will tend towards the Transcaucasus; but she has no right to the Transcaucasus, and we, for our

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part, will oppose her designs to the end. Federation, too, is unlikely. It is only between States of more or less equal strength that federation is possible, and this equality is not to be looked for between big Russia and little Azerbaijan. Physical and cultural differences both make such an arrangement difficult. Nevertheless, we do not expect to be cut off altogether from Russia. There are more than twenty million Mohammedans in Russia. And we shall, undoubtedly, have cultural and economic relations with her.'

I asked about the Bolshevists. 'Russia is expansive by nature,' said the President; 'and Baku is too big a prize for them to be willing to surrender it without a struggle. Still, they may not wish to come now, and, in any case, we shall do all we can to prevent their coming. We are ready to enter into arrangements with them. It may be that, if the negotiations that are now commencing between them and the Poles are successful, they may be glad to come to similar arrangements with us. You must remember that we have had what we call the 'March days' of 1918, when ten to twelve thousand Mohammedans were killed by the Bolshevists, who were then in power. Had it not been for this, they might hope to be successful now; but, in view of the fact that 60-70 per cent. of the workmen here are Mohammedans, who have not forgotten what happened then, there is no danger of Bolshevist propaganda being successful among the workmen here. Nine-tenths of these Mohammedan workmen belong to the 'Mussavat' party, of which I also

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am a member.'—This last statement was pure *blague*; but I had rather expected it.—'Another proof of their moderation,' he went on, 'is that ever since we came into power we have never had a strike. A delegate from Soviet Russia, in the person of a representative of the Russian co-operative societies, has conferred with us about the despatch of five million poods of oil to Soviet Russia, and we are now waiting the reply to the telegram we permitted him to send to his head-quarters. We have decided to sell only for our own money.'

To my inquiry about Pan-Islamist propaganda in Azerbaijan, M. Ussubekov said that only a few adventurers were concerned in it. 'As you know, the Turks were here. If they had stayed here only a few more months, there would certainly have been a rising of the local population against them. And we have decided to close the organs of the "Ittihad" party, both in Russian and in Turkish.'

'When,' I asked, 'do you propose to hold elections?'

The President pointed out that in the summer a large proportion of the peasants would be in the mountains, so that, for the elections to be representative, it would be necessary to hold them either before the end of May or in September. The Government was working on the matter now, and it was possible that they would be held in May. If the lists were not ready then, the elections would be in September.

External affairs, he continued, were complicating

the question of the treatment of minorities in Azerbaijan, especially of the Armenians. 'Our relations with the Russians here are good. Most of our Government departments are conducted in the Russian language.' I asked if it was not intended to make Turkish the official language, which would be equivalent to dismissing all non-Tartars from the administration. M. Ussubekov agreed that this change was intended, but it would not be brought in soon. I remarked that I had read on the railway stations in Azerbaijan notices of courses in railway technique for 'Mohammedans only.' The President said that this was necessary for the safety of the republic; most of the railway personnel at the present time were Russian, and this fact might be very inconvenient in the event of military operations. The introduction of Tartar stationmasters was, therefore, a measure of precaution.

To a further question, the President said, 'The majority here have friendly sentiments towards England. They regard our *de facto* recognition as due principally to her. There are certainly evil-intentioned persons who are trying to raise prejudice against you, but they are only a few. You ask me if it is true that your prestige is low here. No; I do not think so. It may seem so at first sight, but that is only because the opposition to yourselves and to ourselves, the Government, is always able to fight with more weapons than we are. In actual fact, your prestige is recognised by all sensible people.'[1]

[1] Except, as soon appeared, by the Baku Bolshevists!

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I mentioned the presence of such persons as Nouri Pasha and Halil Pasha at Baku.

'They represent nothing serious. Nouri Pasha once did Azerbaijan a great service, when he led the Turkish troops that drove out the Bolshevists. Consequently, the people here regard him as their saviour, and, if we were to send him and Halil away at a time when they and their countrymen appear to the masses in the light of persecuted victims, this would have a bad effect on the popular mind. They are not influential in any circles. They do not interfere in our Government; they cannot. And, if they were to attempt to interfere, we have enough strength to prevent their succeeding. Nouri Pasha has been in Daghestan the whole time, and only returned here two or three days ago.'

The President said that he did not think there was any serious connection, or likely to be, between the Bolshevists and the Young Turks. Inasmuch as both had the same enemies, there might be a theoretical alliance between them, but hardly a practical one. A deputation of Crimean Socialists had recently passed through on their return from a visit to Mustafa Kamal in Anatolia; but from their reports, the President declared, it would appear that the latter was not much impressed by their arguments.

The reader will see that a Tartar Cabinet Minister can be very much like a European one.

The affair of the Volunteer Fleet provided us with our fill of excitement and speculation. The Volunteer Army had a fleet upon the Caspian

Sea, with its headquarters at Petrovsk, which had, until the beginning of April, been the most powerful naval force in these waters. The boats themselves were not of much value, but they were fitted out with British guns. The melting of the ice at Astrahan and on the Volga now allowed the Bolshevists to bring through boats by canal and river from their other fleets, to dispute the mastery of the Caspian with the Volunteer Fleet. This probability, and the collapse of the Volunteer Armies in the Caucasus, drove the Volunteer Fleet from its base at the beginning of April, 1920, and for the last two or three weeks it had been sailing round the Caspian in search of a haven. First of all, it went down to Enzeli, on the Persian coast, where there was a British garrison of Indian troops, and offered to surrender to the authorities there. According to the tale that came through to Baku, the terms proposed by the British command there were too severe for the Volunteer Fleet to accept; one account was that the British authorities said they would have to intern the sailors in small parties over Persia and Mesopotamia; another said that, in view of the serious Bolshevist propaganda that is going on in Persia, it was felt that the presence of so many Russians in the country was undesirable, and the fleet could not be received. Whatever was the real explanation, the Volunteer Fleet suddenly arrived off Baku, a few days before I came. It was received with the rival proposals of the Azerbaijan Government and the local Bolshevists. The Azerbaijanis wished to 'intern' the fleet; in other words, it was

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to pass from the control of the Russian crews to the Tartars. The officers of the fleet made counter-proposals, which would have left the boats in their hands, and by which the Russian naval flag of St Andrew would still be flown. The two parties could not come to terms. Meanwhile the Bolshevists were getting busy among the sailors, arguing that the fleet was Russian, and that, if it was to be surrendered, the only proper people to surrender it to were the Bolshevist Russians at Krasnovodsk and Astrahan. As was notorious, the Bolshevists tried to play upon the patriotism of their Russian opponents, declaring, for example, that the Bolshevists now stood for a great and united Russia. They alleged the appointment of such generals of the old régime as Kuropatkin and Polivanov to high positions as proofs of their changed policy. These arguments were fairly successful among some Russians at Baku, and one wondered if they would convince the fleet.

All of a sudden, the greater part of the fleet, after paying off part of its crews, weighed anchor and disappeared. Only about ten vessels remained behind, to be 'interned' by the Azerbaijanis. Where had the rest gone to? This mystery puzzled Baku badly. The general impression was that the fleet had gone over to the Bolshevists at Astrahan and Krasnovodsk; and the local Bolshevists were jubilant.

It happened, however, that a few days later an acquaintance of mine arrived from Enzeli, and complained that his boat had been held up in the

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harbour there by the fact that the leading vessel in the Volunteer squadron had stuck at the entrance to the harbour. From which it was to be supposed that the Bolshevists had, for the time being, lost the Volunteer Fleet, that the latter had not gone to Astrahan (except for two vessels which, according to a later Bolshevist wireless report, ran up there for a pot-shot at the harbour), and that Persia was now temporarily the possessor of a Caspian fleet, as soon as she was in a position to man it. Whatever else this meant, it ensured that the control of the Caspian would not be wholly in the hands of the Bolshevists. Whether the Azerbaijan authorities realised it or not, they were lucky to have got rid of the bulk of the fleet. Even if they had been able to take it over, they could not have manned it, and it would have been a constant menace to them. So that the arrival of the fleet at Enzeli was the best thing that could have happened.

The taking of Petrovsk by anti-Volunteer forces, which was the immediate occasion of the fleet's journeyings, was claimed both by the Bolshevists and by the semi-Bolshevist bands of the 'Mountain Republic' of Daghestan. From the information that reached us at Baku, the 'Mountain Republic' was in the process of going Bolshevist. Thus concluded the history of this little nest of intrigue, in the building of which several of the rival forces in the Transcaucasus, including Nouri Pasha, had had a hand. Too many cooks spoiled the broth, with the result that the 'Mountain Republic' would now serve neither

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as a buffer State between the new Transcaucasian republics and Russia, nor as a jumping-off point for Pan-Islamist intrigues. Nouri Pasha in particular, I heard, was lucky to have got back to Baku alive.

Baku is a town different from any other I have ever been in in Russia. The inhabitants were part Tartar, part Persian, part Russian, and part Armenian. East and West met and merged in the true tradition of Russian colonial enterprise. There were bazaars that might have been brought bodily from Baghdad; and there were other streets of houses and shops that would do credit to any European town. Indeed, the best hotel in the whole of the Caucasus was at Baku. As I sat at dinner there, I wondered how many of the extraordinarily mixed company would be allowed to pass the doors of an English hotel.

In nearly every street there were signs of Bolshevist, Turkish, Tartar, and Armenian violence. Ruined and gutted houses were a common sight. The worst excesses in the last two or three years have been during the periodical Tartar-Armenian conflicts. Both sides have fought desperately and cruelly, without much regard to age or sex. Even when I was there, continual minor outbreaks occurred. There was a pathetic example at a school-treat given by various ladies, of whom Mrs Walton was one. She told me that the children had divided into two camps, Armenian and Tartar, and a free fight had commenced. Such were minor results of 'emancipation' from Russian rule. At that time, of course, the Tartars were

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in the superior position. The Government had issued high-flown proclamations against the persecution of Armenians, but these orders were safely disregarded by the Tartar hooligan element, including the police, who accounted nightly for a few Armenian citizens of the republic. The Armenians were forbidden to leave Baku, and felt themselves in the uncomfortable position of prisoners of war. It is no wonder that many of them, even among the propertied class, began to look to the coming of the Bolsheviks as their salvation. I, for one, could not blame them. 'If the Bolsheviks come,' a wealthy Armenian merchant said to me, 'we shall certainly be very uncomfortable. We shall no longer be able, for example, to sit in these soft arm-chairs. But we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that everybody else is suffering equally, and not we alone.'

The recent fighting in the Karabagh between the Tartars and the Armenians had aggravated the hostilities between the two races in Baku. Each side claimed that the other had started the trouble there, and the general opinion at Baku and Tiflis seemed to be that the Armenians were to blame in this instance. But in the course of my interview with the Azerbaijan President I elicited the surprising confession that, in defiance of one of the conditions of the armistice arranged by the Allies some time before between Azerbaijan and Armenia, the Azerbaijanis had reinforced their garrison in the Karabagh. This would, of course, provoke hostilities from the

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local Armenians.[1] As a matter of local history, this is an important point.

The Tartar Government, to be sure, were not averse to an increase of anti-Armenian feeling, because they hoped that it might attract elements which might otherwise join the Bolsheviks. The army was known to be far from reliable, in spite of the efforts of Turkish N.C.O.'s to lick it into shape. Walking home one evening with an Armenian gentleman who feared to venture into the streets alone after dusk, I came across a couple of Tartar policemen who were supposed to be on duty in an important part of the town. One of them was wailing a Tartar song, and the other was accompanying him on a flute! They would not have been doing that, I feel sure, if the Armenian had been quite alone.

The town of Baku is noted chiefly for three things—millionaires, caviare, and oil. To the first, I reflected as I walked through the streets, I needed not to devote any attention; they had sung their own praises all too loudly in the architecture of Baku. Of the caviare there was still an enormous supply in the shops and restaurants, though the price was much greater than in the old days. As an illustration of the Shakespearean phrase, 'Caviare to the general,' it may be mentioned that, when the British forces occupied Baku, caviare was issued to the troops as part of their daily ration, until the reiterated complaint

[1] An Allied Commission was appointed, towards the middle of April, to investigate the cause of the renewal of fighting in The Karabagh. But the Tartar Foreign Minister, Han-Hoisky, refused to allow it to pass through Tartar territory.

that 'this 'ere jam do taste of fish' got it removed. Evidence of our departed forces was still given by the huge gamin population of Baku, which cried with one accord after a British uniform, 'Come on! Come on!' adding, occasionally, the insinuating appellation of 'Johnny.'[1] All these infants appeared to be engaged in the trade of boot-blacking—if, indeed, it was a trade and not a hobby, for I rarely saw any one having his boots blacked. I patronised one of these boys one day, and learned incidentally the only other English phrase in the Baku vocabulary; it is used at the end of the blacking of each boot, but cannot be quoted here.

The third great product of Baku, the oil, was the reason of the Town's existence. But the Bolshevist approach and the shortage of rolling-stock and a dozen other difficulties were disorganising the industry when I was there. The oil had made the Azerbaijan State, and it was pretty clear that, with the stoppage of export to the Black Sea, the connection of the republic

[1] The Transcaucasian belief that the word 'Johnny' was an English title of distinction led to a pathetic scene during the occupation of Batum. A wild-looking prisoner was once seen being marched off to prison in charge of two soldiers and vainly endeavouring to soften the Irish Chief of Police's heart with reiterated wails of 'Johnny! Johnny! Johnny!'

On another occasion, at Batum, by the way, an agitated sergeant informed the Chief of Police that a Georgian prisoner in the jail had written several letters addressed to 'George King,' which he wanted delivered. 'And who the hell is George King?' asked the Chief of Police, who thought he had by this time rounded up the various British deserters that occasionally appeared in the Province. On investigation, the letters were found to be an appeal to King George for remission of sentence. They were duly forwarded.

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with the outer world would cease, while the negotiations with Soviet Russia for the monopoly of the oil supply would make Azerbaijan simply an appendage of the Bolshevists. And so it proved.

While it lasted, the Tartar Government had its amusing side. There were some rapid reverses of fortune in the style of the *Arabian Nights*. For example, the Tartar Chief of Police paid a surprise visit one day to the Waltons' flat. It happened to be in a part of the town which made its possession desirable for his personal convenience. He forced his way in and ordered the inhabitants at once to vacate it in his favour. His behaviour was altogether not what a Chief of Police should display. The British representatives at Baku laid information before the Government, who promptly dismissed the Chief of Police from his post and put him in his own prison for a month, where, rumour said, his successor and previous subordinate treated him with more than ordinary harshness. Similar cases were by no means rare.

I spent most of my evenings with an old friend of mine who had turned up in Baku. He was Sergey Gorodetsky, known throughout Russia for a good many years now as the leader of the younger poets. I had last met him in Petrograd in 1915, after which he had been, I gathered, a Red Cross commissioner in Armenia. Here the Russian Revolution had found him, and for two years he had been living in Tiflis, Baku, and Persia. I found him now an ardent pro-Bolshevist, anxiously waiting for the Bolsheviks to take Baku in order

that he might be able to return through their lines to Moscow and Petrograd. I confess that I have never taken Gorodetsky's political opinions seriously, and his present pro-Bolshevism seemed only to balance a curiously bad poem celebrating the Tsar that he wrote in 1915 or 1916, to the consternation of his Liberal friends. At his own work he is extremely able; some of his lyrics have taken their place in the standard anthologies of Russian verse. Here in Baku with his wife, who also writes poems, he was leading a curiously cosmopolitan life. He would be reading poems one day to an Armenian audience; the next day he would be in a Jewish circle; later in the evening he would be among the Russians; and so on. I went with him one evening to a meeting of the 'Baku Poets' Guild,' at which budding poets read their works and criticised one another's. There was one youth, a Persian,[1] who read a poem descriptive of the arrival of the various foreign embassies at the Bolshevists' Conference in Moscow earlier in the year, at which he himself had been present. And there was a young Jew who objected so much to the criticisms passed upon his verses that he argued with Gorodetsky and the others for a whole hour about them. There was also an elderly officer, a Tartar by birth, who had spent his life in the Russian Army and had now attained to General's rank in

[1] He told me one day that he and other young Persians who had been to Europe were looked down on by the conservative old men, who referred to them, for obvious reasons, as 'faux-cols' (*persice* 'focoli.') In remote Khorasan this opprobrious term was corrupted into 'pocoli.'

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Azerbaijan. His verses were, on the whole, the best of the local productions. He used constantly to be in Gorodetsky's company; and the frequency with which the General's and my mutual politenesses held us up at doors led us, in despair, to adopt the following formula:—In public places the General will precede Mr Bechhofer, because he is a General; but in private houses Mr B. will precede the General, because he is a foreign correspondent and enjoys the privileges of a guest. The arrangement worked excellently.

Gorodetsky gave me a copy of his latest book, containing a dozen short poems about Armenia. The best poem was the one which gave the book its title: *The Angel of Armenia.* Some idea of it may be got from the following translation, which does not attempt, of course, to reproduce its rhymes or felicity of sound.

I saw him in a glow of purple robes
Above that land, the saddest of all lands.
And one wing overshadow'd Mount Masis:
The other Sipan, grey with bitter tears.

Beneath him, like a dark and heavy cloud
Collected there along the valleys blue,
From out the gutted, ravaged villages
Poured a silent, suffocating smoke.

Beneath him, at the foot of the ravine,
In the unbroken silence of the fields,
Like to a carpet woven out of pearls,
Shone the white bones of dead Armenians.

And somewhere on the path there slowly trudged
An agonised, hysteric multitude,
The last inheritors of this sad soil,
In weariness of visionless fatigue.

Wroth was the angel, and his visage blazed
As lightning flashes in a raging storm;
And, like a flame within an opal locked,
Redder than roses, the heart within him throbbed.

And high aloft the hero in his hand
Upheld a rainbow with its seven hues.
His forehead was refulgent as the dawn;
His mouth poured forth a cataract of words:

'Arise, O land, from ashes and from ruin!
Collect thy sons dispers'd across the world,
Range them in strong triumphant companies!
The coming of a new life I announce.

'The mirage of hostile spells will disappear,
The rusty fetters fall off like a dream;
And sacred Van, and blue Akhtamar, too,
From out the past shall soon return to thee.

'Arise, O land! Arise, Armenia!
This rainbow I have lifted over thee.
Thou hast been saddest of all lands on earth;
Now cross thyself before thy happy fate!'

I understand that the poem had become very popular in Armenia, as well it might, and that it had been translated into Armenian.

One incident that occurred while I was in Baku was rather curious. It was at the Russian Easter, and I decided that I would go to the Russian

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Cathedral, thinking that, perhaps, there would be some weak survival of the old times. In those days, just before midnight on the eve of Easter Sunday, the congregation would be shut out of the church and, headed by the priests, they would march three times round the outside of the building. Then the priests knocked at the doors and the congregation would be admitted. Afterwards the priest chanted 'Christ is arisen,' to which all replied, 'Verily, He is arisen,' and received the blessing. The outward signs of religion are not now frequent in Russia, as they used to be; I rarely, for example, saw people crossing themselves as they passed a church; and I did not expect that there would be a large congregation at the Cathedral that evening. But I was mistaken. The crowd was so enormous that it more than filled the Cathedral. The crush was terrible, and I saw several children being carried out, half dead. The Russians are nearly always gentle to children, even in the worst times; but some women who collapsed in the Cathedral had to stay inside and survive the pressure as best they could. From the spectacle that night in Baku, one might well believe the tale that Russia is on the verge of a religious revival.

Meanwhile, I was making preparations for a journey to Persia and back. I even paid a pound —Persian currency having enormously appreciated as a result of the War—for a Persian visé permitting me to land in that country, and I chose the day for my departure. You got on the boat at Baku, and by the following afternoon you

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reached Enzeli. It was an easy journey. But it was becoming increasingly evident that the Bolsheviks would soon enter Baku, if they proposed to do so at all; many people still thought that they would not come, but I had now no doubts about the genuineness of Bolshevist aggression. It was clear that if they occupied Baku while I was in Persia, I should be hopelessly cut off from Batum. So, reluctantly, I abandoned my preparations, and decided to return to Tiflis. It was well that I did so, for I had scarcely left Baku when the Bolshevists entered, overthrew the Azerbaijan government without a struggle, and occupied the town in the name of the Azerbaijan Soviet Republic, whose first public act was to declare its alliance with Moscow and a common front against the latter's enemies. The unhappy British who were in Baku were thrown into prison. A British naval mission passing through Baku to take over the Volunteer fleet at Enzeli were also caught and thrown into prison.

The Bolsheviks had matters all their own way in taking over the State. Their representatives in Baku addressed an ultimatum to the Government, which referred it to the Parliament, and the last decided unanimously that resistance was impossible. A Revolutionary Committee took over the control of affairs. Ostensibly it consisted entirely of Tartars, but three Russian envoys from Moscow took part in its deliberations and carried the weight to which their position entitled them. It was thought inadvisable that any but Mohammedans should be officially in control, lest the

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'Mohammedan Revolutionary East' should believe that the overthrow of the 'first Mohammedan republic' had been due to foreign interference. However, the Russian workmen at Baku were assured privately that their representatives would soon take their place in the Government, and, meanwhile, they were told that their interests would be carefully watched. The revolution was a sham; the Tartar Bolshevik Government was a sham. The truth was that Russia had regained her influence at Baku without a struggle. The bluff of Transcaucasian 'independence' had been called.

An immediate consequence of the fall of Baku was to throw Tiflis into a very nervous state. The shortage of fuel, consequent upon the cessation of oil supplies from Baku, necessitated the closing down of all public places early in the evening, and this sobered life very considerably. The Georgian politicians, of course, were still intriguing hard with all parties, and hoped, doubtless, that, by masterly hocus-pocus, they would succeed in compromising so many extra-Caucasian Powers into guaranteeing Georgian independence that these would always be bound to support it. A handful of Bolshevist hotheads tried to arrange a Bolshevist rising in Tiflis in the first week of May, but their organisation was not behind them, and the attempt was a failure. The influential Bolshevists in Georgia pointed out to their sympathisers that it would be senseless to get rid of the Georgian Government, until, at least, it was possible for Bolshevist ships to carry food to

Georgia across the Black Sea. Even then, under present circumstances, Georgia would be merely a liability and a nuisance. On June 20, a Bolshevist ambassador, named Kirov, arrived at Tiflis. He was duly met at the station by the Georgian ministers and the usual military band. Kirov brought with him a large staff, which at once took charge of the Bolshevist movement inside Georgia; he told his lieutenants, however, that an 'independent' Georgia suited Soviet Russia very well. So long as it remained as it was, it was a convenient back-door to Europe; whereas, if they turned out the Georgian Government and made the country Bolshevist—which, he agreed, could be arranged without much difficulty, in view of the natural dependence of Georgia upon Russia—the Black Sea coast would probably be blockaded. 'We don't consider the Georgians as a Government,' he said, 'but as a tool.'

The fate of Georgia, therefore, was on the knees of Lenin.

The fall of Baku meant for Armenia that, instead of just the Tartars being on her east flank, she had now to deal with a much stronger and subtler neighbour. But the Bolshevists were playing for greater stakes than Armenia. She lay in the midst of the half-friendly, half-hostile intrigues of the Bolshevists and the Turks. Sometimes the Bolshevists put pressure on Armenia's flank, in which case the Turks benefited; at other times, the Bolshevists gave way, and the Armenians were able to drive back the Turks. But the failure of the Allies to supply Armenia with the things she

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chiefly required to defend herself with, led to the Turks definitely advancing into territory that hitherto they had not been able to enter. The Armenians now cleared the Zangibazar zone, just outside Erivan; however, as the year drew on, the Turks captured Kars and Alexandropol and cut Armenia's communications with the outer world and broke her resistance.[1] After this had happened (November, 1920), both President Wilson and the League of Nations at Geneva suddenly became very outspoken on behalf of Armenia, and declared themselves willing to use 'moral and diplomatic means' to defend her. On December 8, President Wilson even published a belated decision upon the Armenian frontiers! But by this time Armenia had become an ally of Soviet Russia; in other words, she had temporarily become again a part of Russia.

I found the position at Batum rather unpleasant when I returned there at the end of April. The fall of Baku was evidence of the increasing power of the Bolshevists in these parts, and it was generally believed that the British forces would be withdrawn. The Russians did not know whether to be proud of the fear that the Bolshevists were putting into the Allies, or to be simply contemptuous of our display. The British, of course, had to bear the brunt of this contempt, because

[1] The following occurs in a telegram sent by an Englishman in Tiflis in the middle of November, 1920: 'Half Armenia has been overrun and reconstruction work of past two years destroyed. Tens of thousands of refugees, famished and frostbitten, are struggling towards Erivan. . . . Toll of human suffering equals worst experiences during War.'

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the Italian and French troops that were to reinforce our garrison had not yet appeared. The Italians were treated frankly in the Transcaucasus as a nation now hostile to the Entente. Everybody knew that they had smuggled in arms and equipment for the Georgian chauvinists, at a moment when the latter were seeking support in their opposition to ourselves. Moreover, there were so many German goods arriving in the Transcaucasus through Italian channels that nobody any longer believed that these represented pre-War stocks of the Italian exporters.[1] The French had only a few officers in the Transcaucasus, and made no great display. The Americans at Erivan and Tiflis left those towns in a hurry after the fall of Baku, much to the consternation of the Armenians, and certainly not to the improvement of their own prestige.[2] The unfortunate British at Batum were thus left to represent the Allies, and they had to take their orders from Constantinople, which was certainly not very intelligent in its treatment of Transcaucasian affairs.

On April 29th, two days after the fall of Baku, an incident occurred at Batum which was symbolical of the situation. General Liakhoff (well known as the commander of the Cossack detachment in Persia during the Persian Revolution, and as governor of Batum and capturer of Trebi-

[1] Amusingly, the Italians commenced their official propaganda at Tiflis with the statement that they intended to stabilise the Georgian rouble—this at a time when the Italian lira was jumping about in a disconcerting manner.

[2] Afterwards they returned, when the situation had somewhat cleared.

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zond during the War), who had made himself disliked by the Bolshevists by certain acts committed with the Volunteer Army in the Northern Caucasus in the previous year, came into Batum from his villa to attend a memorial service for his wife, who had died just six months before. In the town he was hustled against a shop window by half a dozen men and shot dead. A policeman tried to arrest one of the assailants, whom he recognised as Korsadze, a Georgian, head of the Tailors' Union and a leading Bolshevist in the town, but the man shot at him and tried to escape. He was, however, soon caught and put in custody. Next day a deputation arrived from the local Trade Union committee begging that the man might be released to address a Bolshevist demonstration on the First of May. To the astonishment of every Russian in the town, the British authorities reluctantly consented to release him for twenty-four hours, the other Bolshevist leaders pledging themselves to restore him to custody after that time. So the man was let loose; he duly addressed the meeting in the Square at Batum, and as duly failed to surrender the same evening. He got clear away. It is difficult to describe the impression that this incident made upon the population of the Province. Liakhoff was not a popular man; but that one of his murderers should be allowed to go loose at the request of a perjured Bolshevik committee—this was really too much for people to stand. The police no longer dared to arrest anybody since they were warned by the local Bolshevists that if they

did, they would be marked out for punishment.

Some days later a French boat, the 'Souirah,' was held up a few hours after she had left Batum and robbed by a band of Georgians who had come on board there, unhindered by the Russian officials, who were supposed to search all passengers for arms.[1] This was considered another proof of the incompetence of the British authority.

Not long before, the railway bridge connecting Batum with Georgia was blown up mysteriously in the night. The Georgian Government, whose secret agents many people suspected of complicity in the act, addressed an impudent letter to General Cooke-Collis, telling him that, as the explosion was due to British carelessness in guarding the railway, all the expenses of repair would be charged to the British administration!

Although no official decision was known, it soon became generally accepted that Batum would shortly be evacuated. The whole place was in such a mess that only a definite programme and the means of carrying it out could save the situation, and these the authorities at home would not provide. Meanwhile, the personnel of the administration was altering; capable officers, who

[1] Among the victims of this outrage were Mrs Haskell, wife of Colonel Haskell, the American Commissioner in the Transcaucasus (officially Inter-Allied Commissioner for Relief to Armenia), who lost some diamonds; Prince Melikov, the former Georgian-British liaison officer at Tiflis; Sorin and Sudeikin, the artists; and other more or less prominent people. The bandits put ashore near the Turkish port of Riza, in a boat manned by the ship's crew. A French destroyer afterwards fetched them away to Marseilles, where they were tried for piracy.

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had learned to know the ways of Batum, were returning home for demobilisation.[1] However, one thing was done to keep things going temporarily; on May 8, fifteen of the local Bolshevist leaders were arrested for their share in the Liakhoff and other incidents, put on board the 'Royal Sovereign,' and deported to Chanak.

On May 20, a battalion of French colonial troops arrived at last, together with a half-battalion of Indians. But, a month later, orders were received for all Allied troops to evacuate Batum. The Georgian Government, much to its outward joy and private alarm, was permitted to send troops to occupy the Province; and on July 9-10 the port was evacuated.[2] The Adjarians were warned by the British not to make disturbances, nor, indeed, were they really in a position to stand up to the Georgian Army without Turkish support, which at that moment the Turks were unable to afford them. So the Georgians marched in. The town at once became nearly as dead as it had been before the British occupation commenced. The Georgians, however, are reported, thanks, doubtless, to the altered circumstances in the

[1] Among them was the Chief of Police, Captain C. O. Cummins, one of the genial Irishmen who had done so much to hold things together. (It was he, by the way, who assured me, on my return to Batum from South Russia, that, 'If the Lord had known that ivery man, woman, and child in Batum was going to be drunk on Easter Day, 1920, He would niver have risen from the grave!')
I left the Caucasus in the middle of May.

[2] Since these pages were written, the British War Office has published a long and interesting dispatch from General Milne, Commander-in-Chief of the Black Sea Army, dealing in part with the British occupation of the Caucasus. (Fourth Supplement to the *London Gazette*, January, 7, 1921.)

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Transcaucasus, to have scrapped—let us hope, for ever—the worse part of their official programme in regard to the population of Batum and to be behaving fairly well to the non-Georgian elements. Indeed, a sign of this is that, towards the end of the year, General Mdivani was appointed Military Governor; he is well known and liked at Batum as an officer with a distinguished record in the old Russian Army, and, consequently, as a Georgian who is unlikely to be afflicted with the vindictive chauvinism of the Tiflis politicians.

Since July, 1920, then, Batum has been in the hands of the Georgians. It is not clear whether they are supposed to be representing the League of Nations, whose control over Batum was established by the Supreme Council's decision at San Remo in April, or whether they are regarded as simply keeping the place warm for Russia, to whom, in one fashion or another—and there is an ample choice—it seems to be inevitable that Batum and Tiflis must return, in the wake of Baku. The ties with Russia, cultural and economic, are so strong in the Caucasus that no amount of planning and intriguing can overcome them. Armenia alone, thanks not a little to her attitude since the Revolution, may hope for political independence and good-will from the Russia of the future.

But, if the solution to the problem of Transcaucasia lies in Russia, who to-day knows the answer to the riddle of Russia?

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